

SERMONS

FOR

LENT AND EASTER.

ALSO FOR

ASCENSION DAY, AND THE THREE FOLLOWING SUNDAYS.

BY THE

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JAC

TO,
MY PARISHIONERS,

Whom from age and infirmities,

I AM NOW NO LONGER ABLE TO ADDRESS FROM THE PULPIT,

OR ADMINISTER TO IN THE CHURCH,

I DEDICATE

THESE SERMONS,

AS A TOKEN OF MY CONTINUED REMEMBRANCE,

AND OF MY AFFECTIONATE SOLICITUDE

FOR THEIR WELFARE.

H. H.

Bury St. Edmund's,

February 18th, 1852.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW iv. 1.

PAGE.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted of the Devil.* 1

SERMON II.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW xvii. 1 & 2.

*And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and
John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high
mountain, and was transfigured before them. . . .* 15

SERMON III.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 6, 7, & 8.

*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery
to be equal with God : but made Himself of no repu-
tation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,
and was made in the likeness of men : and being
found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even the death of
the cross.* 30

VI.

SERMON IV.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ST. JOHN vii. 46.

PAGE.

Never man spake like this man. 40

SERMON V.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

• HEBREWS ix. 15.

And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament. 52

SERMON VI.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

1 JOHN ii. 2.

And He is the propitiation for our sins. 66

SERMON VII.

• GOOD FRIDAY.

• LUKE xxiii. 42.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when Thou comest in thy kingdom. 79

SERMON VIII.

EASTER DAY.

1 CORINTHIANS v. 7 & 8.

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 92

SERMON IX.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is. 105

SERMON X.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

LUKE xxiv. 13—16.

PAGE.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village, called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. 117

SERMON XI.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GENESIS ii. 7.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. 130

SERMON XII.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1 CORINTHIANS xv. 20.

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. 142

SERMON XIII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN xvii. 24.

Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me. 155

SERMON XIV.

ASCENSION DAY.

LUKE xxiv. 50, 51.

He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, that while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. 166

SERMON XV. --

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

JOHN xvi. 7.

PAGE.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. 177

SERMON XVI.

W, H I T - S U N D A Y .

ACTS ii. 33.

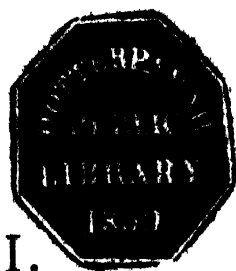
Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 191

SERMON XVII.

T R I N I T Y - S U N D A Y ,

HEBREWS iii. 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 205



SERMON I.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW IV. 1.

*"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted of the Devil."*

THE memorable transaction which these words conclude is related in the Gospel of the day : and it is set before us at this time in order to remind us of those duties which the season is intended to bring with it.

The season of *Lent* was originally observed as one of solemn and severe humiliation ; in the Primitive Church they "fasted, and prayed, and used great abstinence;" (the meaning of the word *Lent* is "the spring," i. e. the spring fast :) and they considered it as a time set apart for the sacred duties of penitence, and prayer, and preparation. If there is less in these days of "*the outward and visible sign,*" there ought not to be of "*the inward and spiritual grace,*" for the same

duties are equally necessary ; and it should seem hardly possible for a Christian when he reflects upon his Lord and Master, and is called upon to view Him in the last stages of his ministry, not to reflect on the purposes for which He lived, or to reflect on them without thinking how he himself may obtain an interest therein.

At all times we should "*look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our Faith ;*" but there are times when we should make Him the chief, if not the exclusive, subject of our thoughts. We might, accordingly, direct them in succession to Him in his *temptation* and *transfiguration*, in His *humiliation* and *teaching*, in His mediatorial office, as dying for our sins and rising again for our justification ; and to the first of them at present. In this, as in all alike, He would say to His followers, "*Look and learn of me ;*" for if in the great scheme of redemption it was necessary, and even suffered, that Christ should be tempted, every Christian must be so likewise—and if he is tempted, does not Christ shew, nay, supply the means, whereby he may resist successfully.

Of the reasons of such an appointment, or of its minute detail, we may be very incompetent judges, and can but read as it is written. It took place immediately after his Baptism, for no sooner was it declared by a voice from Heaven, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am*

well pleased," than his trial commenced: "*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.*"

Such a trial might be requisite at the opening of his great office; retirement and devotion might be needful, to fortify his soul against the eventful ministry on which he was about to enter. He might wish to shew that "*in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.*" And it might be a necessary but hidden part in the divine economy towards accomplishing the redemption of the world. The great adversary of man was visibly the cause of his first transgression. "*The serpent beguiled me and I did eat,*" he caused the fall of the "first Adam," and might hope to be equally successful with the second; he might, as wicked men and as evil spirits do still, rebel against the counsel and will of God, vainly imagining that he might prevail: and when Christ came, who (in his own words,) was "*to destroy the works of the Devil,*" that power was (it might be,) *openly* to be subdued.

Of the *invisible* world and of *spiritual influence* we know so little that we must be content to believe what is revealed without explaining the mode. The sacred records inform us of another system of creatures who were the first transgressors, who kept not their first estate; who left their own habitations, and are the authors and abettors

of that rebellion which hath prevailed in our own world; that the chief of these was permitted, even in Paradise, for the trial of our first parents' integrity and obedience, to tempt them to rebel against their Maker—that since the fall he is still suffered to put the faith and virtue of their descendants to continual proof, the “*serpent's head*” to bruise the “*Messiah's heel* ;” and to pursue (though not without restraint,) his insidious machinations for their ruin—but that all this is permitted by the Almighty for the purpose of displaying hereafter, in a more conspicuous and convincing manner, His wisdom, power, and goodness; that He will so overrule the malice and subtilty of the evil one, as eventually to rescue the faithful from his tyranny—and finally, to put an end to his dominion. Hence, it should seem, the need of “*one greater*” to do so; and here we observe the cause of man's fall and the author of man's salvation brought together—as, in the termination of it, the pledge of that final victory, “*when He shall subdue all things under Him.*”

But, for whatever reasons it might take place, every part of it is striking, and the *practical* part full of warning; for it exhibits to every man the picture of his own condition: it is the condition of *mortality*—no degree of virtue is above temptations. Life is full of them—“the disciple is not herein above his Lord,”—He “*suffered Himself*

to be tempted in all things like as we are," that in all things we may "learn of Him,"—aware of the dangers we are exposed to, but taught also the means of resisting them—certain of having conflicts to endure, but relying on the promise of assistance if we resist, and assured that then they "*shall have no power against us.*" For the purposes, however, of trial, such power may be allowed, for the exercise of our judgment and the trial of our faith; and as an enemy watcheth for the weakest part, seeks to enter where no guard is set, and taketh advantage of the negligence, or the slumber of those he would overcome, so may the great adversary of souls watch for "*the sin that doth most easily beset us,*" and by those of infirmity or weakness, of sloth or carelessness, tempt each with that which is most suited to his taste—the covetous, for instance, with the promise of wealth; the ambitious, with that of glory; the dishonest, of gain; the worldly with the hope of advancement; the sensual, with that of gratification; the wicked, with the assurance of peace; and the doubting, with that of sin being "a small matter, and will not the Lord pardon him for that?" He may by the instrumentality of our passions and desires, and the (at first,) gradual indulgence of them, corrupt the heart, draw it off from God, make it cold and callous to every virtuous thought or holy purpose, and lead men, at last, *captive at his will.*

The forms in which temptation comes are as numerous and various as our inclinations and situations, changing, like the evil one, to that which is most likely to seduce them—and thence the need for watchfulness in all—for in solitude we have our thoughts to govern—in daily intercourse our tempers—in the world our hearts—those hearts, which if they be not made a fit habitation for the Spirit of God, evil desires, evil thoughts, evil continually will “take up its abode and dwell there.”

Now, for whatever greater and more mysterious purposes it might take place, is it not by these very methods by which our nature is assailed, that the temptation of our Lord is marked? When Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the law, he was with the Lord in the Mount forty days and forty nights, neither did eat bread nor drink water. When Elijah followed the angel whom God had sent, he went in the strength of the meat that he had eaten for the same length of time. And it was not till after Jesus “*had fasted forty days, and forty nights,*” (when exhausted nature might crave for food,) that the tempter said unto Him, “*if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*”

With one that was (humanly speaking,) ready “*to perish with hunger,*” what was so likely to prevail as the offering of *food*, when, too, by a

simple act of the will, all the elements of nature would have supplied it? But what was our Saviour's answer? "*Man doth not live by bread alone,*" (it was the answer of Moses to the Israelites, when "*hungry and thirsty their souls fainted in them,*) *but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;*" viz. by whatever He shall appoint for the preservation of life. He could support *without* bread, (he did them, with *manna*, while they were obedient to His word,) and were stones to become bread, without His blessing, they would not nourish. Whatever is received from *His* hands is not to be changed—whatever He appoints not to be refused. *Want* must not by unjustifiable means seek to relieve itself—grief must not murmur, nor affliction seek to be released from its burden before it is ended. *Any word* that proceedeth out of *His* mouth would instantly alter the condition we complain of; ("*thinkest thou not,*" said our Saviour, "*that I could pray to the Father, and he would instantly give me twelve legions of angels, then how would all be fulfilled?*") but it would then cease to answer the very end for which it was sent—it would end *our trial*—that which (as when God did try Abraham by so severe a test,) was meant to prove, and exercise, and make manifest "*what was in the heart.*"

But where distrust in Providence cannot succeed, presumption may; and in that seemed to

consist the next stratagem, when the devil taketh Him into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, "*if Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down ;*" that is, prove to me, and to those that are assembled in the courts below, that "*Thou art the Son of God*"—secure, if thou art so, of the guardianship of those who will "*bear Thee up, lest Thou dash thy foot against a stone.*"

And the great lesson from the answer to it is, that though a good Providence be over us, watchful for our safety, and continually protecting us, yet if we put ourselves into unnecessary dangers, it leaves men to their own desires; if they go heedlessly into temptation, there is no hope of extraordinary deliverance.

There is nothing more common than for men to attempt to extenuate their offences by pleading the weakness of their nature, and the strength of their temptation—or, without considering their danger, to play upon the brink of sin, trusting to their innocence that they shall be borne up, and then not blame themselves if they are not. But St. Paul tells us that *no man* is to say, *when he is tempted*, "*I am tempted of God,*" pleading as an excuse, or apology for his sin, an irresistible impulse to it, and laying his transgressions to his Maker's charge. *God tempteth no man*, more than by suffering such allurements to be laid before Him as are in His power, and which it

is his duty, and the proper exercise and trial of his virtue to resist—the grace of God is a co-operating power, acting in proportion to our endeavour, and we cannot expect the power to resist, unless we, beforehand, do what is in our power to *shun* temptation. It is written, saith our Saviour, “*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,*” abusing His proffered aid, and making the very means of salvation the occasion of falling; or, relying on them, court your own destruction, and expect that His grace or goodness will be exerted miraculously in order to save you from it. “*He shall give his angels charge over thee,*” might, perhaps, in a less degree, be applied to every good man—but the tempter left out what is added in the original, “*to keep thee in all thy ways*”—in all thy ways of *obedience* and *duty*. In the usual difficulties of human life, in the unavoidable dangers that happen in the course of our stations, the providence of God, and the care of “*those that do His service,*” attend the *just*—those that seek and labour to do His will—and while they do so, they shall be “*safe under the shadow of His wings;*” but if they *cast off* their dependance, they may be “*given up to their own hearts’ lusts, and left to follow their own imaginations,*”—if they forsake their allegiance, they are open to every suggestion of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and it must be a miracle that can keep them from falling, if they thus “*cast themselves down.*”

The desire of dominion, however, has, with some minds, the greater influence, and with *these* the tempter is lastly represented as endeavouring to succeed.¹ “*Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto Him, all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me ;*” as if by these *He* was to be moved, who created and made them all.

But in his *human nature only* was Jesus tempted like as we are ; and His example teaches us never to accept of the greatest advantages as the price of our innocence ; but to reject the riches, the honors, the powers of this world, if the loss of our integrity is the condition of the purchase—that the word of God is the shield with which we

¹ Archbishop Whately says, “No doubt the offer of temporal dominion to a descendant of the royal house of David, together with the eager reception this would have insured him with his countrymen, who were anxiously looking for such a Messiah, and the glory and pleasure of delivering them from a foreign yoke, constituted a real and strong temptation, especially when the alternative was rejection by his brethren, insult, persecution, and ignominious death. May not this offer have been pressingly renewed just at the time of His betrayal ? may not this temptation have been the “cup” which He prayed might be “removed from Him ?” With whatever ingenuity the suggestion is made or is defended, His own observation is most just, viz. that in matters relating to the Deity, and revealed by him, not as a special secret to a favored few, but to all who would hear His voice, and which cannot be discovered any otherwise than through His revelation—of these none *need* know less, and none *can* know more than the Almighty has been pleased to reveal.

are to repel the darts of our adversary—that we must instantly stop evil in the beginning, nor suffer the enemy to parley and tamper with us, lest he should entice, or prevail, by some specious or palatable offer—“all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me,”—*they were not his to give*—but it is by hopes which are never realized, it is by listening to the *false* promises of *sin*, that many have fallen a sacrifice to it, and may now be following its ways, or mourning in wretchedness, its effects. The only security against greater temptations is the not yielding to smaller ones—the letting go sin (like “wrath,”) ere “it be meddled with,”—the avoiding first suggestions to evil by some quick determination, some short reflection—and some short precept, some short word of scripture may, as in this case, prevail—it is written, said our Saviour, (and whatever is so, is at once authority, and answer, and reason enough,) it is written, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*”

The temptation of our Lord, as recorded by St. Matthew, however mysterious or in some parts hard to be explained, is a subject for awful reflection and salutary warning. “Simon, Simon,” said our Lord to St. Peter, “Satan hath desired to have thee, but I have prayed that thy strength and thy faith fail not;” and if we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and with

faith and earnestness pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," (the evil one) "*greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, and if we resist the Devil he will flee from us.*"

He did so from our Lord, for when repulsed in every attempt, "*the enemy departed from him for a season,*" and they who had been witnesses of the conflict came to congratulate the victory.

There may be "*joy in heaven*" among those who behold the good struggling here against their difficulties—tempted, but not yielding—assaulted, yet remaining firm—and they may be appointed to guard and protect us from dangers—to relieve those wants from which we will not sin to relieve ourselves—to support us, when we endeavour to do right—and to enable us to overcome. The Christian is promised the assistance of his Saviour—"him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne;" he has one to help him, who, "*himself having suffered, knows how to pity them that are,*"—he has one that has said to those that look for it, "*My grace shall be sufficient for thee,*" "*as is thy day so shall thy strength be.*" A Christian's life, indeed, is described as a warfare of reason against appetite, of faith against sense, of the outer against the

inner man—for even our senses are snares, our sins inlets to more, and our good actions often occasions of sin—different adversaries will rise up in his spiritual warfare, and through these he must fight his way to that crown which is the reward of it. “*If thou come,*” said the wise man, “*to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation;*” there can be no probation, no virtue, it may be no salvation, without it; but difficulties vanish before those that have grace to withstand them, and he that hath learned to keep himself, “*that wicked one toucheth him not.*”

The belief of his agency might but increase our care to be “sober and vigilant”—to faint not, but to watch and pray. It does but urge us the more strongly to have recourse to that Almighty power, to whom all other powers are in subjection, to that “Father of Spirits” whom all others, visible and invisible, obey.

The same Spirit which led Christ into the wilderness, attended and supported Him; so does He still all that look up to Him for help. “*There hath no temptation befallen*” (nor can it) greater than his, yet could it not for a moment shake his mind—neither ought it that of his servants—they too may have their trials, but in the hour of temptation, in the dark season of adversity, they may think of Him who was subject to all our infirmities (sin excepted) in order to shew how we should behave when under them. By these

He was "made perfect," and by them only shall we be too. "*Blessed*," saith the Apostle, "*is the man that endureth temptation, for he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*"—and when "the conflict's o'er," when the struggle of life is passed, when he has withstood and finished (*nay when he is finishing*) his ordained trial, to him, too, as to his Saviour at the end of His, the same testimony and comfort may be vouchsafed,—"*angels may come and minister unto him.*"

SERMÓN II.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW XVII. 1 & 2.

“And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain, and was transfigured before them.”

ALTHOUGH our blessed Saviour, for the purposes of our redemption, “took upon Himself the form of a *servant*,” lived on earth in poverty, and was, to all appearance, a *mortal man*, yet there were many occasions (even before His resurrection,) on which His true dignity was displayed—when His glory broke through the cloud that covered it, and He was “*declared to be the Son of God, with power.*” And the contemplation of Him in one of those situations to which, in this mortal life, all are alike exposed, as subject to that temptation from which He *would not*, and we *cannot*, of ourselves, be delivered, as contending with the

great spiritual adversary of mankind; though, when He was led up, and left to his assault, even then, there were those who witnessed, and exulted at the termination of the conflict, "*angels who came and ministered unto Him.*" The text refers to another and very notable circumstance in His life, and sets Him before us in another point of view. He had been, for the first time, telling his disciples (upon their owning Him to be the Christ) of what he should undergo; from that time forth, Jesus began to shew to his disciples, how that He must needs *go up unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*"

They could hardly believe it; for as yet they were imperfectly acquainted with the mystery of His humiliation: and He was thus pleased to shew them (and *in them* the faithful of all ages) that His suffering was the great argument, not of His weakness, but of His power—that He only *suspended* the powers and veiled the *glory* of His real nature—and to give to a chosen few an earnest of *that* in which He was finally to appear.

"*After six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John,*" disciples who seem to have been distinguished by our Lord's peculiar confidence, and to have been with Him upon the most important occasions, (they were on the last mournful one of all, and it might be to prepare them against the

offence of it that this took place) that they might "see His glory," and not be offended at those scenes of deep abasement in which they were shortly to behold Him: "*and He bringeth them up into an high mountain,*" it is supposed to be that of *Tabor*, one to which he used frequently to resort for the purposes of prayer, and to which He might now take them intending, as He often did, to spend the night in that holy exercise.

It is in the exercise and seasons of *prayer* that we obtain just views of religious truths—that the illusion of present things wears away, and that eternal ones open upon us in all their real magnitude and importance—it is *then* that we learn to think of Christ, or of ourselves, as we ought—that having asked for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, we see those things which are but "spiritually to be discerned,—it is when "two or three are gathered together in His name," that Christ hath promised to be in the midst of them, that His nature, grace, and power are best made known to them. He was *afterwards* made known to his disciples, "in the breaking of bread,"—and He was *here*, (after, perhaps, some solemn act of intercession, when their minds were prepared and disposed to receive Him,) "*He was transfigured before them,*"—the word is explained by what follows: "*his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*" St. Mark says, "*his raiment became shining, exceeding white as*

snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them ;” and St. Luke, that “as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.” “Christ,” we read, “is light,” dwells in light, covers Himself with light, as with a garment—and, therefore, when He would appear “in the form of God,” He appeared in light, the most glorious of all visible beings, the first-born of the creation, “light of light, very God of very God.” It was the radiance of the divine presence, the shekinah, or cloud of glory in which the divine Majesty often appeared to the Jews—and there were glorified Saints attending Him, that when there were three to bear record on earth, there might be some to bear record from Heaven also—two of its inhabitants also were there,—there talked with them “Moses and Elias,”—who appeared in glory, and spake (it is added,) of *His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.*” Struck with the wondrous sight, the Apostles gazed, and the eager one, imagining that Jesus had now assumed his proper dignity—that Elias was come, according to Malachi’s prediction, and that the kingdom was then commenced, St. Peter, in rapturous surprise, exclaimed, “*Master, it is good for us to be here ;*” what greater happiness can we experience, than to continue here in the presence of the great heads of the law, the prophets, and gospel, “*let us build here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias,*”—

not knowing what he said, but as if unwilling ever to quit the scene, and experiencing a delight which devotion might pour into the entranced soul, "*here could I for ever dwell, for I have a delight therein,*"

In the moments of worship and adoration, when the soul is lifted up to God, in the contemplation of his glory and the converse with heavenly things, when grace is in the heart and praise upon the lips, we might wish to continue in that state, and not to return to worldly thoughts and affairs; it might seem a natural effusion; but while we are in this mortal state there are *active* duties for which devotion itself is meant but to prepare us, and to which we must return, and descend from the height to which we have been raised. It is good for us to be *here*,—we come to worship God, that we may hence derive grace and strength to perform aright the offices of our respective stations,—there are duties to which by our Christian profession we are called in the world,—there are precepts of Christ's religion which we, in our daily converse are to practice, because *He* hath taught them; and His authority, and power, and nature, was here confirmed by the voice of God himself, for "*while he yet spake a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, this is my beloved Son, hear ye Him.*" Here then was a

clear revelation, and a near approach of the Deity,—and as the most righteous man that ever lived would feel a degree of terror if God were to manifest himself to him in his glorious majesty, though sweetly tempered with mercy and with grace, “*when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid.*” But it is the merciful office of Him who came to “*die for our sins, and rise again for our justification,*” to support the infirmities, and ease the terrors of a troubled mind, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to give us hope and confidence when we are to appear before him. It is Christ by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises those who are fallen in the dust; and silences their fears; and none else can do it,—he can,—he will: “*Jesus came and touched them and said, arise and be not afraid.*” His errand into the world was to give comfort to His servants, that being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might “serve God without fear,”—and one word of His effected it—--their fear fled, and so had the vision, for “*when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only;*” but the time for their declaring it was not yet come, and “*as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.*”

The great doctrine of a resurrection from the

dead is here declared, though the hour was not yet come when He was to be declared, excepting to those who were chosen to be his witnesses—and there seem, moreover, some other truths and ends which were to be answered by this singular manifestation. The *first* is, the infallible testimony which it gave to Christ, as the Son of God. St. Peter remembered it in his old age, and has recorded it afterwards as such—“*we have not,*” says he in his second epistle,¹ “*followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty, for he received from God, the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased—and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*” St. John says, “*we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*” It is analogous also to what took place at His baptism, when “*the heavens were opened unto him, and the Spirit of God was seen descending like a dove, and lighting upon him ;*” and to the attestation to His divinity, which both David in the Psalms, and St. Paul in his Epistle, have given, “*When He bringeth his only begotten Son into the world, He saith, let all the angels of God worship Him.*”

The next might be, to denote the ceasing of the

¹ Chap. i. 16—18.

Mosaic, and the establishment of the Christian dispensation. The mediators of both were here: Moses had been the giver of the former, and Elias the restorer of it, Christ was to be the foundation of the new one—their ministrations were but preparatory, and ended in *Him*—to *him* they both bore witness—on his ministry they now waited—they were “*servants of his that did his pleasure,*”—his infinite superiority to them is here declared, “*this is my beloved Son;*” and accordingly, when “they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only,” Moses had vanished—Elias had disappeared—but Jesus remained—remained, as he ever does, “*the same yesterday, to day, and for ever;*” as his word does, when all that was preparatory to it, shall have vanished away—remained, as Himself will, when all “*principalities and powers are made subject to him;*” when he cometh in his glory, and all his holy angels with Him—when He cometh in that future glory, of which they beheld the token,—in that transcendent brightness,—in that awful and tremendous majesty, when “*being in the form of God, he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead,*” attended not merely by Moses and Elias, but with ten thousand times ten thousand of his saints, to be admired of them, and to receive them into his everlasting kingdom.

It refers *next* to the same dispensation which hath been from the beginning, still going on here, and witnessed in the world above—it tells us of those that are therein, and of our connection with it. God is not, we read, “*the God of the dead, but of the living,*”—and here were those who had died ages before, still living—still, as it seems, furthering that scheme in which they had borne so conspicuous a part—still desiring, perhaps, (like the angels of God,) to look further into that mighty plan—still, perhaps, “ministering spirits sent to minister to them, that should be heirs of its salvation,”—still (as the great Christian doctrine teaches, that the saints and servants of the Lord are, when released from this world,) acting in a different, but a higher and a larger sphere; not, it may be, insensible to what is passing in this, having “*joy*” (we read,) “*over one sinner that repenteth,*”—some, in this world, having (as in the communion of saints, they may have more abundantly,) “fellowship” with them, sharing in their friendship, and reaping advantages from their labour of love. The eternal world, though yet to us invisible, is near: a moment may bring us to it, and here were the inhabitants—here was the Lord of it—here was the likeness of what the pure in heart may, through Him, become; of what they may (if found worthy,) hereafter be; of what those who have departed this life *are now!* Could

some of them, who now experience that bliss, and look, perhaps, with tender concern for the eternal interests of those whom here they loved, perhaps with sorrow, when they see them following the ways of sin,—could they come down from their celestial abodes, and visit us, how would they “*testify unto their brethren,*” how urge, how persuade men, lest we come not to the same abodes! They, indeed, may not return to us, (though we pray that we may go to them)—Moses and Elias come not again, but they have appeared—Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles; his word, and his ministers, all with one voice declare the same—they tell man of the future state, and what he must do to inherit it—they shew Christ’s glory, and talk of his power—they seem to pass before you in their state, and shew you what, by his all-powerful grace and blessing, and your sincere endeavours, you may become. One of the most merciful assurances of the gospel is, that *all* ends not here—that the end of the mortal is only the beginning of an immortal life; that when the eyes close on this world of sense, they open on the world of spirits—and one of the most obvious reflections upon the departure of *any whom we have regarded* is, how much more now *they know* than we do! how much more than it hath (we are told,) entered into the heart of man to *conceive*! if they have departed this life in the true faith and fear,

if, in sure and certain and comfortable hope they have gone, it may be but to *realize* what here they had prepared for, and to *experience* what here by faith they had *believed*. And God, therefore, in mercy still is pleased to take unto himself, those who might the most strongly remind us of it, those with whom, if no closer ties connect us and give us pain when they are broken, some strong ones have united; those whose ceasing from among us, marks again the uncertainty of life, and gives us warnings of it; those by whose instructions we might have profited, or from whose lips we might have been taught the word of God. They are not indeed “transfigured *before* us;” we see not “the body that shall be,” to us is left only the earthly one, cold and lifeless, motionless and mouldering, the wheel at the cistern stopped, the voice that erst spake to us, dumb; causing in all who behold it, the most awful reflections; in those who depended on it, the bitterest pangs of grief; in those who are bereaved, the deepest loss,—to be assuaged only by the belief of all the divine dispensations being for the wisest purposes, of their being still under the care of a merciful Providence, who never leaveth nor forsaketh those who trust in him, whose word saith, leave thy fatherless children, I will protect them, and let thy widow trust in me, sooths them with the hope of where they, that have been torn from

them, now are, and with the consoling one that if worthy, one day we may meet with them again.

It reminds us, therefore, *lastly*, of that great change which may take place in ourselves after death, in those at least who are Christ's at his coming, (when this mortal shall have put on immortality) and of what we may then behold. The state indeed in which our Lord appeared while among men, humble, poor, despised, was in fact a transfiguration, and that in which he shewed himself in the real splendour of his glory was his true and natural condition. A *participation* of it, is what his true disciples trust hereafter, through his merits, to obtain—a participation of the mercies of that covenant, whereby to as many as believe in him, he giveth power to become the sons of God,—an entrance into that kingdom, where just men are made perfect, and their soul doth magnify the Lord, and their spirit may rejoice in God their Saviour; to be with those who have sought and served him, to be joined to the general assembly of the pure, the just, the first-born, to approach and to be made more like unto them and Him. But in order to this, in order to there being a transfiguration of the body, there must be a previous transformation of the soul to a resemblance of Him, by faith in his word, by a reliance on his atonement, by conformity to his precepts, and imitation of his example, by beginning here, what there shall go on increas-

ing, by forsaking what would unfit us for it, by cultivating what would prepare us : he that hath this hope in him, of being changed into the likeness of his Lord, of seeing him, as the disciples did, in *glory*, of being for ever in his presence, he that hath this hope; must purify himself even as *He* is pure,—he must be *renewed*, and *regenerate*, he must be *pure* and *holy*, and *just* and *good*, or he never will see that life in which nothing that is impure can ever enter, nothing that is unholy can dwell. Of those that do inhabit there, of us if we are blessed enough to do so, he may “*change the vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body,*” the human form may become divine; the mortal, immortal; the perishable, incorruptible; the earthly, heavenly; its nature, like the purified soul, refined, its appearance like the transfigured Redeemer, bright—the face may shine, (the righteous do, we read, in the kingdom of the Father,) like the sun, the raiment be white as light, the pious believer who now follows him with the eye of faith may behold him, (himself in an infinitely low degree, resembling, but yet approaching, to Him,) and at last literally see the majesty of the Godhead, in the person of his glorified Lord—you likewise may be transfigured—you may be like Him, for you may *behold Him as he is*—in the highest sense, may you then say, “Lord, it is good for us to be here;” from that holy mount you will never be called down—the

glory which is there revealed, “fadeth not away.”

These are views which, amidst much that doth fade away, soothe and tranquillize us ; which, while we are in the tabernacle of the flesh, support under its trials, and give a different character to them ; which tell us of other mansions to which those who here now are not, may be removed—of inhabitants, who live, and move, and have their being, in a different state—of those, among whom *we* may be ! In order to this, it may be *good for us* awhile *to be here*, (though in the course and order of God’s providence, better for others to have departed and be with Christ,) for *our fitness* for it may not yet be complete, *our probation* not yet o’er—and here is the scene of our probation and of our trial for it ; we must “bear the image of the earthy,” before we can “the image of the heavenly ;” and “*many*” (we read) “*shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, —but the wise shall understand.*” *It is good for us to be here*, (till God shall see fit to take us hence,) to approach Him in his holy ordinances ; to worship, to know Him, as far as we can know Him in this mortal state, in the hope hereafter of seeing and knowing Him as *He is* !

“In every view of our Lord we are reminded of this—if the temptation of our Lord was enough to warn and alarm our fears lest we fall, that of His

transfiguration was to excite our earnest endeavours, and our ardent hope, that as He then was seen by his disciples, we, in some measure, may hereafter, see him ourselves — that (cleansed through his blood, and redeemed by his merits,) we may, in some brighter form, exist hereafter, “That when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.”

SERMON III.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

PHILIPPIANS II. 6, 7, & 8.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

THESE words contain, in strong and marked expressions *two* great doctrines of the Christian faith, viz. the *divinity*, and the *atonement* of our Lord—doctrines, which the more they are contemplated, the more wondrous they appear—and which, though in many parts above our reach, tend but the more, when embraced with faith, to fill us with humility and awe—doctrines, too, which seem very intimately connected, for, if

he, who "*was in the form of God,*" "*became man,*" it must be for some mighty and wondrous object; and again, such an object as the *redeeming of mankind* might seem one which required a more than mortal power, and which "*the arm of the Lord alone,*" might be able to reveal, or to effect.

We have before dwelt on the conflict between the author and the adversary of our faith, when, soon after his baptism, He entered on his ministry; and it is the object of this season to lead us through all the closing scenes of it—to commemorate the death and the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ—to meditate on the mystery of our redemption—to magnify the mercy of the Almighty in the great plan of *our deliverance*, and to excite those returns of affection, obedience, and gratitude which we owe. St. Paul, in this chapter, is exhorting his converts at Philippi, to the virtues of humility and charity, "*Let nothing, he says, be done through strife or vain glory,*" but *in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself*, and then, knowing the efficacy of example above precept, he bids them look up to the pattern of this and all other virtues, which is exhibited in our Lord and Saviour, and "*see if any was like unto that*" which *He* shewed,—for what humility is to be compared with that in which *He* condescended to lay aside his divine glory and to become man; *what* compassion,

what love, what charity is equal to that with which he bowed himself down to a lowly condition among men, “*coming not to be ministered unto but to minister,*” to suffer a life of affliction, and a death of shame, for the salvation of his creatures. But the Apostles’ own words will better enforce it, and they refer *first*, to that state of dignity in which he was enthroned, before the world began; *secondly*, to that to which he willingly descended to become man; and *thirdly*, to that which as man, and as the accomplisher of man’s redemption, in his human nature he is exalted.

“*Let this mind,*” says he, “*be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation.*”

Now of that pre-existent state, of his being “*before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made;*” of his being the Creator, when “*in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth;*” and to continue, when “*the heavens and the earth which now are have passed away,*” we have many plain intimations; and the Apostles’ own words (in his epistle to the Colossians) are express, “*who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principali-*

ties or powers. All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." We find in many passages in scripture declarations of the same, of the attributes of *Deity* assigned to our Lord; the very expression of "*the Son of God*," implies a *similarity*, an *union*, a *proceeding*, which however incomprehensible to our finite understandings, is yet very determinate; and if a different existence or supremacy be implied, when as the head of the Church, as the redeemer of his people, he says, after his resurrection, "*all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*," the power in which as the eternal Son of God, and therefore one with God, he had before, is here as fully shewn, "*the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power*;" and the words of his last sacerdotal prayer, when he had nearly finished his work, was, "*and now, O Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world began.*"

The Apostle seems, however, to dwell upon the point, as if to heighten the mercy by the contrast: *who being in the form of God* (in real and transcendent glory) *thought it no assumption to declare him self God*," he laid aside the external glories of it, he was not desirous of *appearing* while on earth as God, but *made himself of no reputation*: the original word seems much stronger,

and marks the willing choice of it, he *emptied*, he divested Himself—and made Himself of no reputation—we see the Redeemer here, as in other scriptures, offering, and *voluntarily* submitting Himself, stooping from the throne to visit his rebellious creatures,—if He “*thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*” was he not equal? or if it was the effect of his humility that he did not hold, or insist upon that equality with God, when incarnate, yet surely he *had* then such equality—and if he, willingly, and for our sakes, did *leave* it, with the dignity of his nature, the greatness of the mercy increases; and we, too, can but in humility adore the *love* which prompted, and the *power* which was able to execute!

But of the next state we can judge *less feebly*, for it is that of our own, in which we have beheld Him, in which, veiled as his divinity was, it yet occasionally burst forth, and we beheld, too, “*his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” He might, for that purpose, have come like one of those ministering spirits which surround the throne: and how should we have welcomed and blessed that spirit, which thus came with healing on his wings; He could have come (as we read He shall at the end of the world,) *in the glory of his Father, and of his holy angels*—but, He himself suffered, that we might “learn of Him,”

that He should be the great pattern for us during our sojourn in life, and to shew that "*He is able to succour them that are tempted!*" verily he took not on himself (as he might have done,) *the nature even of angels*, but "*he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man,*"—He appeared not (in his ministrations upon earth as the Messiah,) with the splendour of the Godhead, which at former times He had shewn to the Israelites, but He stooped to "*the likeness of man;*" He clothed himself with our nature; He submitted to the sorrows, the infirmities, the miseries of this life—He chose for himself, not the exalted condition in which the Jews (without reason,) expected their deliverer to appear; but "*He was among us as one that serveth,*"—he took upon him "*the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.*" This was great humility, but this was not all—for being man, He descended still lower—quitted the dignities and honours which, even as man, He might have retained—submitted to the *meanest* condition of the sons of men, a condition exposed to scorn and contempt, to indignity and pain—and being found in fashion as a man, he, who was in the form of God, and whom all "*the angels of God,*" at his entrance into this world, were bid to "*worship,*" humbled Himself, and became "*obedient to the law for man.*"

Oh! divine instance of such humility as

we can scarce conceive of, and never can adequately repay ; of that virtue, which in however small a degree we can, we too are taught to practice, and even in the greatest degree, "*does then shew likest Gods,*" of that meekness, which "*in all lowliness,*" *seeketh not its own,* but the good, and the salvation of others, and " committed itself in all its trials to Him that judgeth uprightly." The most fatal, and, perhaps, the corruption that sticks closest to our nature, is *pride*, fittest, therefore, to be subdued and lessoned down by him, who came to *heal* our corruptions, and to renew our nature. "*Nay, but O man,*" look upon the blessed Jesus—see the King of Heaven humbling himself, making himself of no reputation, submitting even to be betrayed into the hands of wicked men, eating with the traitor, admitting his unfaithful kiss, mute before his judges, crucified with thieves—and all that for thee, to quell those passions, to subdue that evil, which else might be thy destruction, to teach thee the real Christian mind, "*without which, whosoever liveth, is counted dead before him,*" without which thou "*canst not be his disciple,*" without which thou canst not ever be where he is,—"*that mind which was also in Christ Jesus,*"—he endured "*the contradiction of sinners,*" he was "*oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth,*" he was "*despised and rejected of men ;*" "*the Lord of glory,*" hid in "*the man of sorrows ;*" "*the Lord of life,*"

slain by the hands "*of men*,"—of those men who else would never have seen life,—of those who else would have continued to "*lie in darkness, and in the shadow of death*,"—of those whom his benig-
 nity prompted him to come down to save, to leave the bosom of the Father, to visit a sinful people, to "*give his life a ransom for many*," and "*to seek and to save that which was lost*;" and it is the contrast that constitutes the magnitude of the mercy,—from what height descended, and to what lowliness,—by nature higher than the highest, by choice lower than the lowest; the *only arm* that was "*mighty to save*," the *only power* that could deliver,—the only being that could pay the ransom, and be the intercessor to stand between justice and wrath, to turn aside the flaming sword from Paradise, to open again the kingdom of Heaven to all believers; "*his own self, in his own body on the tree, to bear our sins, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness*," and for this purpose, quitting not only the joys of Heaven, or the common comforts of life, but humbling *even then* himself and becoming (for the sake of his creatures who otherwise would have remained estranged and unreconciled,) the obedient, the willing victim.

"Wherefore," lastly, it is added, "*God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*." To the nature of *him*, indeed, who was originally in "*the form of God*," and in

possession of the divine glory, no new *accession* could take place; for his glory, *in this respect*, was perfect before, and all honour was his own: *that* supreme and absolute dominion was inherent and essential to him—*that* universal adoration was his strict due from all eternity,—but when Christ undertook and completed the redemption of the world; *then* was to be made known the glory, not only of his divine nature, which ever was the same, but of his mediatorial office. One was essentially his own from the beginning—the other, that in which thenceforward he was to be known as the object of worship to his redeemed people, the Lord of his creatures, the head of his church, which he purchased with his own blood.

If it was in *our* nature that he obeyed, and merited, and suffered—in this, too, was he rewarded, and exalted—an exaltation which makes us capable of the same—an exaltation to which, as he alone could be entitled, (as the second Adam, as the restorer of what human nature lost in the first,) so *he alone*, can exalt us to it—who, by uniting it inseparably to his own person, and thus vouchsafing to take part in its infirmities and sufferings, entitled this human (now his own likeness,) to share in all the bliss and glories of that *divine* nature, which was originally his own. “*Thou hast made him,*” says the Psalmist, (as prophetic of the exaltation of human nature in the person

of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the right hand of the majesty on high,) "*Thou hast made him a little, i. e. for a little while, lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.*" The blessed in heaven are represented as saying, "*Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood.*" . . .

And when, in our highest act of devotion, we add our feeble note of praise, we are joining with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify his name.

Thankful for the mercies of our own redemption, we long to make them known to others, that

"All the listening earth be taught,
The acts our great Redeemer wrought."

We join in missionary labours, we spread the holy scriptures, trusting that the time will come when they shall be known throughout the world, "when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and when, "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that He is Lord."

SERMON · IV.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

· ST. JOHN VII. 46.

“Never man spake like this man.”

It might be hoped, that ‘in a country where the religion of Christ is publicly professed, the *truth* of it might at all times be taken for granted, and that the *ministers* of it would have nothing more to do, than to build on that ground, to be employed only in exciting men to a practice suitable to their high calling,” *to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.*” But the dangers to which it is continually exposed, as well as the state of the world at large, and of many individually, make it necessary to recur to the first principles of it, in order to shew how deeply they are laid, and that like the real and sterling ore, the more it is tried, the more its intrinsic value will appear.

With this view, some of its leading points have been laid before you—and though they appeared, we should hope, to shew that the scriptures are “*worthy of all acceptation*,”—the power of God, and the wisdom of God—the “*power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth* ;” yet it must be remembered, that these are but the *prominent features* of the whole body—the broad outworks of a fortress, which will afford still further proofs of its stability to those that will enter into it, and that, as our Saviour said, is “*built upon a rock*, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.”

We have, accordingly, dwelt on the *transfiguration*, the *divinity*, the *atonement* of the Son of God ; but if we go one step further, and look into *what* he taught—the sublimity—the dignity—the manner—the importance of it—that he “*spake*” (even as his adversaries owned,) “*as never man spake*,”—delivered with irresistible authority, truths far above all mortal wisdom—and was for awhile, to all appearance, the “*son of Joseph*,” without learning, without the means of gathering instruction from any source ; there arises, it should seem, a degree of conviction, superior to all others, and which every one must feel, because the obvious question for us, as for them of old, is “*whence hath this man these things—what wisdom is this, except it be given Him from above*.”

We dwell not now upon the higher and peculiar

doctrines, which they, who feel their power, know best—which speak to the heart of each, and answering all its expectations and its hopes are to them in the place of a thousand witnesses—which in their healing, and consoling, and animating influence, give “*a peace which passeth all understanding,*” and shed “*joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost,*”—but we may assert that there never was a religion which did this so effectually, for it teaches us to obtain those blessings, which “*by nature we cannot have,*” and forbids only what nature would repent of; none were ever so uniformly calculated to answer all the wants, and to remedy all the imperfections of our nature—for it not only teaches us to love and adore God, but to love and assist each other, and at the same time that it promises “*rest unto our souls,*” from the reception of its doctrines, it allows, nay, it commands those souls to open and expand themselves to the pure, the noblest, the most exalted pleasure, viz. the joys of charity, the hopes of penitence, the comforts of devotion, the prospect of immortality—and wishing to make the world again (as it was before the fall) a paradise of peace, it so interweaves the interests of each individual with that of every member of society, that it commands us to “*do good to others,*” only that good may be done to us, it enjoins *obedience to superiors*, that we may not be ruined

in confusions, it commands *respect to equals*, that when we want assistance we may find it, and it enforces *condescension to inferiors*, that by pitying the miseries we never felt, we may never deserve to feel them; if wisdom, mercy, and justice, then, if simplicity, goodness, holiness, and charity, are images of God, and if love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance, are the fruits of the Spirit, and rays of divinity, *that doctrine in which all these meet, with such transcendent lustre, must as infallibly have come from God, as they are utterly beyond the reach of human power to teach.* •

Now this is a case of which no man who hath eyes to read, or ears to hear, can entertain a doubt, because it is only opening the book, and the facts speak for themselves; the poor were to “*have the gospel preached unto them,*” and the poorest man amongst us, with the gospel in his hand, may be better acquainted with the nature of the Godhead, and the relation in which he stands to it—with his own origin, his nature, his destination, and his end—than were any of the greatest sages of ancient times; it delivers its momentous truths in majestic simplicity, *concise, rational, and certain*—it “*talketh with us as a friend,*” and seems like the voice of God communicating with his creatures for their eternal good, in language suited to his mercies and their necessities. Even in the very character and

manner of our Saviour there is an awful greatness, a conciliating loveliness, which at once attracts and convinces—" *he spake as one having authority,*"—and " *his word was with power.*" Supernatural truths were as familiar to his mind as the common affairs of life to other men—he mixed in these, even when "one with God," and as if to shew that when we are religiously employed in the duties of life, "God is not far from every one of us,"—he, one while, commanded the elements and they " *are still,*" and at another, " *embraces little children, or washes his disciples' feet,*"—he wept as a man over the tomb of Lazarus, and with the voice of God he bade him " *come forth,*"—he yielded to the blasphemy of the multitude, even while he told them he was "the Son of God," and that hereafter they should "see Him coming in power, and great glory,"—with the affection of a son, his last earthly care was the " *commending his mother to his beloved disciple* ; with the majesty of an all-powerful king, he gave pardon to the penitent malefactor, and promised to receive him into his kingdom. On the effects of his death and passion, and all the greater doctrines connected with them, we, at present, dwell not, (though they all tend to the same point, and proclaim more strongly their divine original,) but only upon the consideration of what our Lord *said and did* ; and there is in it such a mixture of all

that is great and good, so different from what man had ever taught, and so characteristic of him, who was to be the Saviour of the world, as admits of no parallel in the whole history of man, and to which no equal can be traced in the whole creation of God. . .

For what are the truths which it declares either of the nature of the Almighty, or of ourselves—of the motives, or the nature of our duties? Does it not set him before us in the light most consonant with reason, with nature, with experience; most calculated to command the reverence, to gain the affection, and to engage the obedience of man? It represents Him in the persons of a Creator, a Redeemer, and a Sanctifier, pitying his creatures, and providentially careful of their welfare; *affectionate as a parent, merciful as a Lord, and watchfully provident as a guardian*—but as a *parent*, neither criminally fond or indulgent; as a *master*, dispensing with service to encourage idleness; or as a *guardian*, attentive to their interests that they themselves may be careless of it. It describes Him as not more amiable in his goodness, than terrible in his justice, and glorious in his majesty—incomprehensible in his nature; unsearchable in his counsels; and wonderful in his providence—as the *object of worship*, to be approached “in spirit and in truth,”—not pleased with the useless, but not averse from the edifying

ceremonies of religion—demanding mercy rather than sacrifice, more pleased with the fervent prayer, and regarding rather the sighing of a contrite heart, the “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” than all the pomp of costly offerings—and leading man, as his highest privilege, to draw nigh unto God in *active, earnest, and aspiring faith*—reverence, resignation, joy, and hope, are then the great springs of action—the constant endeavour to perform his will, both suggests our particular duties, as well as the spirit with which they are to be performed, while the love of Him is the secret bias which directs and rules—the source of genuine and acceptable obedience—every desire is that of piety, and every duty is an act of praise.

The same feeling is inculcated in all that he teacheth of *ourselves*; representing us as fallen and redeemed creatures, as unable, without divine assistance, to work out our own salvation; he shews the necessity of absolute humility, at the same time that he encourages cheerful confidence—while in the promise of his all-sufficient grace, and in the prospect of brighter scenes above, of an inheritance for the just, ~~for~~ those that are made the children of adoption, and are qualified, through their Saviour’s merits, to be made partakers of it,—there is everything that can excite our hopes, or awaken our fears, the great motives to uniform holiness, and the sole support in every affliction.

Even in declaring these truths, our Saviour "spake as never man spake," for the good of the *present* life was ever the sole object in those who sought to instruct mankind; but the *grounds* on which he founds our duties are not more peculiar than the duties themselves. And it is here that the gospel of Christ lays the great security for virtue, for it would engage the heart to the practice of it by powerful and affecting considerations, and guards it by a corrective, as strong as it is new, *viz.* the *internal and habitual regulation of it*. To human lawgivers, it is enough if they can control the *actions* of men—the overt act is all that they can observe or judge by—Christ's law controls the thoughts—does, nay "*thinks no evil*," keeps the heart with all diligence, from which proceed the issues of life—it may be death—purify the fountain and it will send forth pure streams—be inwardly religious, and you will commit no crime.

The silent performance of good actions (that most substantial test of genuine virtue,) is thus, too, most effectually provided for by a rule never so much as thought of before, *viz.* "*study to approve thyself before thy Maker*,"—we are commanded not to be ambitious of those shining qualities which attract the admiration of mankind, because we are then actuated by a principle of vain glory, "*loving the praise of men more than the praise of God*,"—but the gospel saith, "*take*

heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." He regardeth the motive alone—and by that actions are weighed—"when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites—and when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, (where no eye can witness, and no human applause debase or cheer,) and when thou hast shut the door, (against every thought or motive that is unworthy to rise up before Him,) pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

This is, indeed, the first step towards forming that Christian mind which our Lord requires, the perfection of human nature; and peculiarly his own. Instead of the daring, the selfish, the vindictive spirit, which has ever been the favourite of mankind—He inculcated the happiness and comfort of others, the consideration of their feelings, the promoting of their peace—patience under trials—fornbearance under provocations—forgiveness under injuries, (virtues as hard to be acquired, as when acquired, they are serviceable to man.) "*I say unto you love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to them That hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you,*"—never man spake such precepts, for they seem repugnant to his nature—but the more we examine the doctrine of Christ, the more we are convinced that He "*knew what was*

in man," what were his passions, what was his interest, what his real greatness—he knew that it might be harder to *endure* than to *retaliate*, but that it is the mark of a more noble, and the duty of a Christian mind—a remedy for most of the miseries of this life, and so necessary a qualification for the happiness of another—he knew that the great sum of the afflictions of life springs from ambition, from revenge, from hatred, from the turbulent and pitiful passions—the seeds of all public and of private strife—and, therefore, laid so much stress upon the *passive* virtues, upon the milder spirit, upon the secret and silent kindness of the heart—who, but Himself, ever thought of declaring those blessed that mourn—or saying, blessed are the *meek*—blessed are the *pure in heart*—blessed *are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake*—who ever taught that it might be "*good to be afflicted,*" or that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven?" who ever set before men as the model of their imitation "*to be perfect, even as He is perfect,*"—or to learn, ~~as the~~ summit of the happiness and perfection of man, to learn of *Him* that was "*meek and lowly in heart?*" No one, but Christ, ever "*spake*" such precepts, and none else ever fully practised them—but, in his own person, He shewed that they *were* practicable, and in Him,

and Him alone, we see them, as it were, embodied and incarnate, given to bring "peace on earth;" and they are, like Himself, "full of grace and truth," for they breathe the spirit of that heaven from which he came, and to which he would conduct us—well might even an unbeliever say, "the majesty of the scripture astonishes me, and the sanctity of the gospel speaks to my heart." Compare, indeed, the life and doctrine of its author with any of those which have ever been devised by man, the highest, the wisest, or the greatest of the children of men—compare them with those of his, who once endeavoured to introduce his religion on mankind by indulging every vicious inclination, and alleging a divine commission to justify his oppression and his lust—arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands who fell by his destroying hand—boasting, as his followers at this instant do, of the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged, the desolation which he caused—then, in the words of an eloquent divine,¹ "Go to your natural religion, and shew her the blessed Jesus—humble and meek—doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse—let her see Him in his most retired privacies—let her follow Him to the Mount, and hear his devotions, and

¹ Bp. Sherlock.

his supplications to God. Carry her to his tribunal, and let her consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies—injured, but not provoked, reviled, but struggling not—lead her to his cross, and let her view Him in the agony of death, yet, even then, hear his last prayer for his persecutors, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’” When natural religion has viewed them both, ask which is He from on high? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the cross—by him she spake and said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

SERMON V.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

HEBREWS IX. 15.

*“And for this cause He is the Mediator of the
New Testament.”*

OUR Saviour is styled (in the Epistle for the day,) “*the Mediator of the New Testament,*” and many of our prayers are concluded through his name, as “*our mediator and advocate, Jesus Christ.*”

A mediator means one who transacts between two parties that are at variance; and it is peculiarly applied to Christ, partaking, by his divinity, of the nature both of God and man, making peace, and reconciling us, while we were yet enemies, to God. An *advocate* is one who advocates for the guilty, and is the means of averting the heavy judgments which they justly may have deserved. To these two offices we, at

present, are to turn—and they contain a doctrine of the first importance, since every thinking mind must be anxious to know “*wherewith it may come before the high God,*” and *how* it may come before Him so as to be accepted !

Some men, indeed, look upon this as a *very easy subject* of enquiry. They have such low conceptions of the divine purity, and so high an opinion of their own, that they see little occasion for any such means of reconciliation. They admit that repentance for what has been done wrong appears reasonable, but when they have confessed, (generally, and perhaps, slightly,) their faults, they presume that God is too generous to require any further reparation, that he will readily pardon, and receive them again, as if they had never offended him ; never considering how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, what it is to incur his anger, and how greatly all are offenders before him. *Reason*, however, might tell us, on further consideration, that though God is *merciful*, he is also *just*—that if, from the former attribute, we have much to *hope*, from the latter (till its claims are satisfied,) we should have all to *fear*—and that a creature, covered with iniquities, would have no ground to rest upon, before a God of unspotted holiness, and inflexible justice.

But, whatever we might conjecture, the scripture shews it to be necessary, and in both of the

testaments (*i. e.* covenants,) which God hath been pleased to make with man, it has formed the great and leading feature.

When, in the old testament, He made first a covenant with his creatures, what was it but the means by which they might be delivered from their offences, (from the punishment which was due to them,) and restored to his favor—and how was it ordained? “*it was added because of transgressions, and it was ordained in the hands of a Mediator.*” Moses, we know, was appointed to be so; to teach his people “*statutes and ordinances, that they might walk and please God,*”—he was to make known to them the counsel of God, and be their *prophet, priest, and king*—he was to rescue them from a bondage to which they were exposed, and conduct them through many dangers, to a land of promise—he was to “*appear before God continually,*” to offer up prayers and supplications for them; he was to go up to the Mount, and hear from the mouth of God himself, to intercede for them if they did wickedly, to pray for their pardon when they erred and strayed from his ways, and they worthily deserved to be punished: “God said ~~he~~ would destroy them, had not Moses, his servant, stood in the gap, to turn away his wrathful displeasure, lest he should destroy them.”

Aaron, again, was an appointed intercessor, a type of the great one, the chosen of the Lord, to

offer up prayers and supplications, and when the people had offended, and, in consequence, wrath had gone forth, and a plague had begun, he took incense, and went forth, and made an atonement for the people—he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was staid. In the daily ministry in the temple, and, in every one ministering therein, there was the same remembrance kept up, the same notion of sin to be repented of, and atoned for, the same means of this being effected; there was the altar, the offering, and those to offer it—they were to weep between the porch and the altar, and say, “spare thy people, O Lord, spare them.” But the office of the high priest was the most remarkable—their tabernacle (or temple,) was divided into two parts, in the outer of which, he offered the sacrifice of victims, (for without blood there was no remission of sins;) but in the inner part, called the sanctuary, and separated by the veil, in which were the symbols of the divine presence, and in which it was supposed to reside and be manifested—himself, . once in the year, alone entered, as the representative of all, sprinkling the blood, and scattering the ashes of the sacrifice, to denote their being purified from legal pollution, and on their behalf, making the offering. Read only the Epistle of the day, and you thus find the explanation of it. *“Christ being become an high priest of good things to come,*

by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, i. e. not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us—and for this cause, also, He is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," i. e. that by means of his own death upon the cross, for the expiation of sins, which the law could not expiate, all who believe in him should not, (as else, therefore, they might have done,) should not perish, but have everlasting life. As, under the law, blood was always shed as the sign and seal of a covenant, so was it under the gospel, viz. by "the precious blood of Christ,"—and if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, were supposed to sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, be effectual to cleanse from the guilt of sin, and purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.

The nature, and the infinite superiority of the latter, is pointed out—"theirs could not make the comers thereunto perfect, for then," adds the Apostle, "would they not have ceased to be offered?" Christ needed not (like them,) to

offer for his own sins first, for he was "*the Lamb of God,*" spotless and pure—his ministry was not exercised by one compassed about with infirmities and death, for he was "*the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,*"—he needed not to enter into that "*tabernacle which was made with hands,*" for he made his own body the residence and the temple of the divinity. The holy of holies was the *figure* of heaven, but he is ascended into the *true*; what the high priest was *there*, our intercessor and advocate is *above*; the blood under the law pointed out the blood of Him, that was the sacrifice on the cross; and the office of their mediator represented that of the world's Redeemer, alone of all mankind entering the heavenly mansions by the gate of his own personal merits and righteousness, entering in *once* into the holy place to plead his own obedience and suffering, and procure our reconciliation with God, "*having obtained eternal redemption for us.*" Here, then, we trace the great and merciful dispensation of the Almighty, carried on by his Son and holy Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in a state of ruin. The scriptures speak of that Son as still living, and furthering in heaven that salvation, for the efficacy of which as his *sacrifice* here might be necessary, so also may be his *intercession* above—they represent Him as being now our intercessor and advocate with the Father, as procuring for

us access to God in our devotions, as making our repentance available, when with purpose of heart we turn unto the Lord—and procuring for his faithful people, health, pardon, and peace.

That great being, the eternal word, who, for the most merciful of all purposes, left the bosom of the Father; (where, in the splendour of his deity, he was, before he took upon himself our humanity,) made *this* world the scene of his *humiliation*, as the *other* is of his *glory*—and though removed to the brightness of it, has not relinquished the object for which He became incarnate. “He it was who “*made the world and all things in it,*” and who, with an eye of mercy and regard, beholds them all—is, by his divinity, present everywhere—dwelling with his own—sending unto them the comforter—“*with them always, even unto the end of the world,*” and giving them grace, whereby they may be “*made daily more and more like unto Him,*”—all power is his in heaven and in earth—all things are put in subjection under his feet—and He is “*able to subdue all things unto Himself,*” as He is also “*to save to the uttermost those that come unto God through Him.*”

The mysterious *nature* of that state to which He is exalted, or of *that office* which He there exercises, we are not to attempt to know; it becometh us reverently to abstain from needless enquiry as to the *manner* in which this intercession is

conducted, for the *mode* of intercourse between the persons of the godhead is far above all human comprehension—it is enough for us to know how deeply we are interested in this ministration, by which our persons and our services are presented for acceptance—*seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, we are to hold fast the profession of our faith*, and apply all the great doctrines of it to the purposes for which they were revealed. •

When our blessed Lord had, by the offering of Himself upon the cross, made “*a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,*” it behoved Him, as the great high priest of the human kind, to “*enter into the holy place, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us,*”—and thither, accordingly, Christ ascended in our *nature*, and on our *behalf*—there He pleads the merit of his atonement—offering the incense of his own perfect obedience—blotting out the condemnation and the curse which was written against us, and interceding with his own blood for all those who “*with hearty repentance and true faith,*” flee for salvation to the foot of the cross; and his will, no less than his power, is made the argument for our dependance on it—“*wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for*

them,”—they must come to God—they must come to Him by Christ—and then he is as able as he is willing to save them that do.

There are, therefore, expectations and duties resulting hence peculiar to the Christian, towards Him who is exalted far above all principalities and powers. Were we redeemed by the Son of God, are we now under his government, and shall we be finally under his judgment, and think that obedience, and service, and worship, are not due to Him as such? Are not those religious affections of *faith*, and *trust*, and *hope* in Him called forth thereby—and arise there not thence increasing motives for them all? When, indeed, “*the end cometh,*” and that character in which he appears as mediator shall no longer be necessary, the glory of the Deity may be seen *without* the veil, and “*God shall be all in all:*” but if, at present, we can see only darkly, (from our inability to form clear and suitable conceptions of the divine essence, and of that union of the two natures which subsists in the person of our Lord,) in the awfulness thereof, there is enough to teach *humility*, as, in assurance that He is both able and willing to receive all who truly turn to Him, enough to allay every doubting fear, and to encourage every pious exertion.

• It allays the fears which even the *natural* man must feel in the thought of an eternal and omniscient God, and affords relief for the infirmity

which unfits us for communion with Him. Without such means we still might be left in a state of hopeless alienation; for where is the human mind that could of itself devise the means of restoration—where is the mortal being that could, of himself, dare to approach the seat of purity and justice? To “*look upon God in Christ*” is the great privilege of the gospel—to know that “*through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father,*”—to know God, through Him, as a reconciled Father, who, for that Son’s sake, is merciful unto his creatures, and in Him hath been made manifest, for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—in Him “*we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;*” He said himself, “*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father,*”—and when he adds, “*whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name he will give it you,*”—we have the utmost assurance for our prayers, and the surest ground for hope and confidence; the highest attributes of God are softened to our apprehensions, and through Him, who has enabled us to approach the eternal throne of the Almighty, we cry, “*Abba, Father.*”

Here, too, it is that to the humble and contrite heart this dispensation speaketh peace—“*we have an high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God;*” “*we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,*”—we

beheld Him *here* “*taking upon himself the form of a servant,*”—veiling his divinity, although occasionally it burst forth—submitting to the maliciousness of wicked and of cruel men—and giving that unexampled instance of divine love, laying down his life for them, and suffering upon the cross—but we behold Him, too, in his divine nature, rising above this earth, returning to that heaven, which for our sakes he left, and there still furthering the purposes thereof—we behold the great high priest that is passed into the heavens, and no longer think of the “holy place” where the Almighty sits enthroned, merely as the dread abode of inexorable majesty and holiness—we know that it has been entered by one who bore on his body the marks of human suffering—who felt the agony of resistance to the powers of darkness, and bowed, for a time, under the weight of divine wrath—we follow Him, as the disciples visibly did at his ascension, to where, sitting in majesty on high, he still exercises an invisible government over his own by Himself and his Spirit—is ever present with them—imparts Himself unto them—“abides,” as He hath promised, “with them, if they abide in Him,”—supports them under trials—guards them to the end—receives them after it into his everlasting kingdom, where the spirits of the just, accepted for his sake, and purified from whatever of earthly pollution has been

contracted in the midst of this sinful world, *after they are deliver'd from the burden of the flesh, are with Him in joy and felicity.* We are not only at the disposal of an omnipotent but under the protection of "a faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour," who "loved us" even unto death, and would lead us to Himself by all the feelings and sympathies which belong to the tenderest relationships. One of the most soothing perhaps we know is the belief that there are those who have loved and still feel for us—the recollection of some who would have tenderly watched over our temporal, and prayed for our eternal interest,—it is the foundation and the effect of some of our nearest and dearest ties, of our best and purest affections,—but here is one who in the highest and most inconceivable degree, having Himself known all the trials and temptations of mortal life, unites all the sympathies of man with the holiness and perfections of God—who, with the same love with which he endured all on earth, looketh on those who still are subject to them; the same love which made Him, for our sakes, bear all the sufferings of the cross, is ever still exerted for us—the same plan which made the endurance of them necessary, is still carrying on—the same Saviour who, here in his sacerdotal prayer, before those sufferings, said for his own, "*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am,*

that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me,"—still offers the prayers which are presented in his name, mingles them with his prevailing intercession, and advocateth their acceptance—and however incomprehensible the office to our very limited capacities—however the *human mind* may, in its blindness, be unable to comprehend that mighty Being whom, in His glory, it cannot yet behold—in all its trials and its sorrows, in all its weakness, guilt, and fear, the human *heart* may think with comfort that it hath not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of its infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are—that he, who in his sojourn upon earth, stood revealed to our conceptions in the figure, the countenance, the feelings, and the affections of man, hath for us entered within that temple, into which we hereafter through Him, may—that the otherwise inaccessible throne is divested of its terrors in the thought that He who “*bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,*” who “*knew what was in man,*” who Himself *suffered as man*, is gone before, the mediator to offer, and the advocate to plead for us.

And if under the law the high priest in his *golden garments* came from the sanctuary, where he had been pleading for them, to the people who were praying without, and declared to them the *absolution and forgiveness* of sins, so “*when the*

end cometh" may Christ come in all his glorious majesty to declare to all his faithful people pardon and peace,—to take the good unto himself and bid "*the blessed children of his father receive the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world,*"—not suffering as the sacrifice for sin, but triumphing as the conqueror thereof—not then as the Redeemer, but as the rewarder of those that are redeemed,—not then as the mediator, but as the judge,—when all shall be judged—when all, accordingly, shall be dealt with—when the wicked shall be abashed—when the righteous shall be accepted—and the great purposes of redemption may be completed, and "*God shall be all in all.*"

"To them that look for Him shall he appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation."

SERMON VI.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

1 JOHN II. 2.

“And He is the propitiation for our sins.”

WE last considered our Saviour as the mediator of the New Testament, and as our advocate; the Apostle continues, “*and He is the propitiation for our sins.*” The words can never more strongly be applied than after having heard the plain and striking narrative of the gospel, which places him, as it were, before our eyes, “led like a lamb to the slaughter;” and they contain a subject which must ever be a most interesting one to every thinking mind.

As the completion of the stupendous and continued scheme of the Almighty, it is awful: as the means on which human salvation depends, it comes with every claim that can awaken the

attention. However mysterious in many parts it may, (and must, perhaps, for ever remain while we are "*in the tabernacle of the flesh*,"") as far as our practice and our affections are concerned, nothing can be more clear, and nothing more fully or expressly declared—but if there have not been wanting those who, building upon themselves, rather than upon what is written, would tempt others to doubt, and even "*deny the Lord that bought them*,"—if, insensible of what was wrought, in that, for each and every one of them, others regard it not with correspondent gratitude, or are inclined to think not aright upon what lies at the very corner-stone of the Christian religion—there may be greater need to shew how the doctrine is as consonant with the soundest principles of reason, as it is with the whole word of God; and to consider both the necessity and the comfort of it to man.

Now when he considers his own nature and that of God, his own sinfulness and his Maker's purity, the righteous law he is required to obey, and his daily transgressions of it, every humble man will be sensible that he wants some such method of deliverance, and the presumptuous betrays his want of it even by his being so. Imperfection cleaves so closely to everything human, that we cannot review even our best duties and services without a deep sense of it, and after all that we can do, our continued suit

to God must be, to "bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences."

Natural religion taught men this, and no man can set up his reason in opposition to revelation, without setting it up in opposition to the common sense and feelings of the world in every age. The power of sin upon their consciences the Heathens fully felt, nor could their best philosophy devise any sufficient means of purification and deliverance: they endeavoured to find one by "*vain oblations*:" to the head of the victim they thought to transfer the transgression of the individual: whether their own suggestion, or derived by tradition from what was at first revealed, they attributed an efficacy to what they offered; they thought by the offering of another life to escape that punishment which was due to their own, and sacrifices of expiation made up universally the external religion of mankind.

These indeed seem to agree with the natural notions of justice, and with those of the moral government of God which appoints that wickedness must be punished, and makes misery by a necessary consequence ever attend on disobedience to his will. "We see that misery follows from particular actions, men bring upon themselves poverty, disease, or temporal death, by the hands of civil justice. Vice brings its penalties even in this life, and by a similar

constitution of things, it will (if unatoned for) in another. God hath given immutable laws for the general good of his creatures; and the effects of the transgression of which may extend in their consequences, far beyond the limits of our narrow and bounded capacities, and spread the seeds of misery and disorder, as widely in proportion to the universe, as vice evidently does over the corrupted communities of the earth,—now, “*if all have sinned,*” and are therefore obnoxious to what is denounced against sinners, and mercy to us might have been inconsistent with mercy to the rest of God’s moral creation, there is a knot worthy of the interposition of the Deity, there requires a plan more than we can naturally find out to reconcile these opposite expectations, to shew at once the danger of sin, and yet God’s compassion towards the sinner, to release the penitent offender from that heavy punishment, which his disobedience had incurred, and yet give no encouragement to others to hope that they might violate his laws with impunity.

That without some such means future punishment might (and must for aught we know,) have followed, (notwithstanding all that we could have done to prevent it,) is therefore reasonable—and that repentance alone would not have been able to avert it, seems implied in the common course

of things. Repentance is "the being sorry for what we have done amiss,"—but does sorrow, when convicted of a crime, save a man from the punishment of it? Reformation of life is "the doing right for the future,"—but will doing right for the future be sure of making amends for having done wrong before? will the not incurring a new debt cancel one that has been before contracted? will the creditor take it in payment for his former one—or is even common justice, or equity, satisfied with the compensation? the creditor may forego upon the suretiship of another—a prince may grant a pardon to a malefactor upon intercession, where something is to be done on his part, and something by another, (the very method of it being calculated to bring him to that state of mind in which he ought to be,)—and when the doing our duty for the time to come may be, not useless, God forbid! but wholly insufficient alone and of itself to prevent the punishment which is due to us, or to put us in the condition we should have been in, had we preserved our innocence, the Almighty may (and we might hope he would,) grant unto his sinful people, (when, by their own conduct, in a state of enmity with him,) remission and forgiveness—not free, but conditional—Faith in the means, as well as Repentance in the mind, being the condition of the promise. It is for want of a due and awful sense of those

things, which the present state of vice, and misery, and darkness, seems to make probable, that the necessity of such a scheme is less acknowledged, and that the goodness of God therein is undervalued. Evil exists in the world; we believe that it is for greater good, though that good is not always seen; sin and death (we see,) reign, however hard, without scripture, to form distinct conceptions of their introduction, or their circumstances; and we want to be informed how they shall be vanquished. Conscience, though it is not always sufficient to restrain us from wrong actions, as soon as the action is done upbraids us with pungent reflections, and tells us how sinful and weak we are—it shews men their crimes, but does not point out the remedy—it proves them subject to the anger of God, without any certainty of being able to appease it—it makes them feel, in “*the multitude of offences,*” that they are not free from the contagion, and may not, hereafter, be from the punishment of them—it cannot, even by searching, find out one “*to bear the iniquity of us all,*” although it feels the wretched want of “*who shall deliver me from the body of this death;*” in the mercy and instances, however, of human interposition, it may find the likeness of the divine, and also the sentiments which it might excite:—when the general devoted himself for the preservation of his army, (however inefficacious, or superstitious, the offering,)

he was reckoned to "*deserve well*" of those whom he had saved. When friends would suffer or die for each other, we admire the magnanimity and fortitude; when parents would endure privation, hardship, or affliction, for their children, we admire the love, the affection, which prompted it—but how infinitely short falls all comparison, and everything intended to be illustrated by it, in the example of one, (the only Being sufficient to substitute himself for such a ransom,) becoming, by the most transcendent act of mercy and benevolence, "*obedient unto death,*" that he might thereby rescue all mankind, who must else have continued to "*lie in darkness and the shadow of death,*" and open unto them the gates of light and life!

Here, then, where nature and reason might suggest an hope, but where, from their light alone, there would be no "*sure and certain one,*" Revelation comes in, and in this eminent and wonderful act of mercy dispels every doubting fear concerning the future unprevented consequences of sin, represents mankind to be in a fallen state, from which they may be delivered; teaches, that though by their own repentance they might not be sufficient to obtain pardon, there are yet the means, the merciful means, appointed of reconciliation, and that by the one oblation of Christ once offered, (glimpses whereof had been seen in expiatory rites, commanded

to some, and practised by all,) men are restored to their inheritance, and made capable of attaining to the kingdom of heaven.

Considering the Old Testament as a preparation and a rudiment for such a scheme, we might expect that it would contain in its institutions frequent tokens and indications of it, and accordingly we find that every thing therein tended to keep alive the same opinion. The religion of the Jewish nation was one of sacrifice, "*Without shedding of blood there was no remission.*" The principle of an expiation and an atonement ran throughout. And although it might not be "*possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin,*" they were the likeness of that which could, prefiguring the one great offering in which they were all to receive their consummation, and with which they did conclude, "*by the which will, we are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all.*" In the New Testament, from the beginning of his ministry, to his being led to Golgotha, "*like a lamb to the slaughter,*" his own words point out the same doctrine, and his Apostles afterwards confirm it. He saith "*I lay down my life,* (and it is upon the voluntary act of it that we must insist,) "*I lay down my life, and no man taketh it from me.*" He is described in the first salutation by the Baptist as "*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.*" He was "*offered to bear the sins of*

many." He *"came to give his life a ransom for many."* He *"redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* He was *"our advocate with the Father," "he is the propitiation for our sins."* And from Moses to Malachi, from Matthew to the Revelations, the nature, the object, the end of his sufferings are so clearly set forth, that it should seem impossible, taking the words in their plain and evident sense, to embarrass or perplex their meaning.

The plainness of the doctrine might be that which made the wise to stumble at it, and thence it was, that it was *"hid from the wise and prudent,"* who, like Naaman with the Prophet, would not be healed but in their own way, or without some great ostentation, nor be contented to think anything could be *"the wisdom of God and the power of God,"* unless it were somewhat that was abstruse, or at least conformable to the wisdom which they had. And if we cannot rest satisfied without knowing how the death of Christ is available to make satisfaction for mankind, there the scripture leaves us, for it was not given to gratify but to abase pride and self-conceit, and to bring every thought in obedience to Christ. If we could understand all nature around us, and could give a reason for everything we see, we might then have some pretext for enquiring about the manner and circumstances and relations of the yet *"higher things of*

God," but where, antecedently to revelation, we can be no judges, and can, even with that, take in but a few links of the interminable chain, we may accept the benefit with thankfulness, without questioning the means, and receive it with that humility of mind which both its awfulness and its mercy might inspire. If there is any thing plainly revealed in scripture it is the atonement of Christ for the sins of the world; and shall we reject "*so great salvation*" because we, ignorant mortals, cannot understand the mode of its efficacy,—miserable objection! as if the ways of the Almighty were all to be comprehended by us, or our inability to comprehend them be the measure of his dealings. Can an insect comprehend the reasonings of a man? Can a man those of his Maker? In counsels, too, so deep and wide, that even angels "*desire to look into them!*" "*The wisdom of God,*" says St. Paul, "*is a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory*"—and St. John "*that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world.*" Known indeed, "*unto God are all his works from the beginning.*" To the divine mind, the scheme extending throughout all ages, is comprehended under one view, as one complete and perfect plan. To man, the dispensations of God present themselves by degrees, and in detached parts, and even that part which we do now see, "*we*

see darkly." But the fact of "*the redemption of the world by the death of Christ,*" connects every part of all that is revealed, the creation, the fall, the necessity of a satisfaction for it, the law with all its outward ordinances, and the gospel with all its "*inward grace;*" it fills up the dealings of God towards the children of men in all its parts and harmony,—one great and merciful design for the saving of those who receive it as the only rule of conduct in this life, and as the only rock of their hope, in another.

Of the unspeakable importance of this, the secret powerful witness of the Spirit of God, (converting and convincing the soul,) brings a proof beyond every other persuasion in the world, beyond any conviction of demonstration, because it is an evidence which will reach the humble and the meek, and "speaketh comfortably" to their distresses and their fears—it "*satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" When in the remembrance of omnipotent justice and human sinfulness, there might seem no means whereby it could be satisfied, and an offending race be saved—here is a method proclaiming, by the greatness of the ransom, the immensity of the guilt, and making the very mercy of it the motive to personal holiness. When, in the seasons of affliction, "*sorrow hath filled the heart,*" and in the moments of dejection, the "*soul is disquieted within it,*" in the contem-

plation of Him that was "*the propitiation for our sins,*" of a suffering and crucified Redeemer, there is a soothing balm—for He, too, was "*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,*"—He "*bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,*"—and can be "*touched with the feeling of our infirmities,*"—He ever still "*liveth to make intercession for them,*" and "*pour down the riches of his grace*" on those that ask it—He still saith "*I will not leave you comfortless, lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" When the mind of man finds nothing in itself to flee unto, and in the near prospect of eternity, and nothing here in this world to rest upon,—when mortality is about to cut asunder the closest ties, and put a period to all earthly enjoyment or expectation—how consoling is the thought of committing those, who "*lived in his faith and fear,*" into his hands, as into the hands of "*a faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour ;*" by whose blood whatsoever defilements were here contracted, may be purged away, and the soul be presented pure, and without spot, to God ! When, in the sense of guilt, the "*sighing of a contrite heart*" is all that it can raise—when lying down or rising hereafter from the bed of death, it shall be summoned to a tribunal above, "*and see its maker face to face ;*" when before his dreadful bar, the sentence of eternal condemnation might proceed, how merciful is that covenant which

may be pleaded in arrest of judgment, how supporting is that doctrine whereby we may appear, comparatively, with boldness at the throne of grace, "*not having our own righteousness, but that which is of faith in Him,*" for "*who, else, would abide the day of His coming?*". who else, at that hour, relying on his own works alone, could look for acceptance, or be able to stand in His sight? If God enters into judgment with his servants, what man living would be justified? Gracious, then, is that Revelation which setteth forth one that is the "*propitiation for our sins*;" gracious is that covenant in which mercy and truth are met together, in which the awful majesty of the judge is qualified by the lovely mercies of the Saviour. Man, covered with iniquities, has, of himself, no title to favor, before an infinitely just and holy God "*in his sins that he hath sinned he would die.*" By faith and obedience he is instructed to hope for forgiveness of the past, and assistance for the future—in life to be directed—to be delivered "*in the hour of death and in the day of judgment,*" through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

SERMON VII.

GOOD FRIDAY.

LUKE XXIII. 42.

“And he said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me, when Thou comest in thy kingdom.’”

OF all the objects upon which a Christian's thoughts can fix, that of “Christ crucified” is the most awful and affecting; “*sorrows like unto his sorrow*” no man can read of without pain, and no one can believe without sharing them. It is not however persecuted innocence on the one hand, and brutal malice on the other, it is not simply the spectacle of human patience and meekness, tried by the passions of a ferocious rabble, which alone excite our feelings,—far other, and far higher matters must mix themselves with our meditations, or they have no savour of life in them,—and when we consider

who it was that thus endured, and why,—that it was the eternal Son of God descended from Heaven, disrobing himself of the glory “*which he had with the Father, before the world began,*” and thus “*humbling himself, even to the death upon the cross,*” submitting to a life of reproach, and want and sorrow, and closing all with a death of torture and of ignominy,—that he did this to redeem the human race from sin and death, from punishment of which human reason could have devised no means of escape, and human power could not have averted,—these are points which distinguish the doctrines of our faith, which shew the sublime mystery of our redemption, and display alike the severity and goodness, the justice and the mercy of God.

They shew awfully his justice, and his abhorrence of sin, if such a sacrifice was necessary to be “*the propitiation for it,*”—they shew his tender mercy, if “*God so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,*” if for the most merciful of all purposes, the Son of God’s love took our nature upon him, to suffer in our stead, and died that we might not die eternally. Vast, therefore, as that scheme is, which extends, in its consequences, from the fall of man to his final restoration, deep as may be the mystery into which even angels desire to look, the interest of every son of Adam in the

terrors of that day ; it is to the individual case of each, and to his personal interest therein, that the great truth applies, it is to the question of whether he is neglecting or relying upon that atonement, and what is his hope therefrom. And as in every other circumstance of Christ's death, so in one more especially is this suggested, for he was not only (in fulfilment of the Prophet's words) "*numbered with the transgressors,*" but with those whose peculiar conditions point out the danger of neglecting so great salvation, and the happiness of accepting it ; "*there were two thieves crucified with him, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*" One of these was a reprobate ; after a life led probably as theirs usually is whose wickedness brings them to an untimely end, he died hardened, and without any sense of compunction ; perishing in his sins by his Saviour's side ; within reach of that blood which was poured out for his redemption, but wanting faith to stretch out his hand and be saved,—and unawed by the surrounding terrors of the scene, unawakened by the word of life, and casting his sufferings in his teeth, "*if thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.*" The other was of a different spirit, (or rather by the spirit of God he was made so,) he might not have lived in the fear of God, but by the grace of God he was now awakened truly to it,—he saw the greatness of his power, who could, but

would not “*come down from the cross*,”—he saw the work of God,—his heart was changed, he believed, he repented, he ventured to address his dying Saviour with a petition for mercy, “*Lord remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom*,”—we behold the Saviour of the world, even when upon the cross, the emblem of his doctrine, himself the great object of all human hope, the great rock against unbelief on the one hand, and despair on the other,—leaving to die in his sins him that regarded him not, but blessing the penitent, and in that mixture of majesty and mercy, promising him admission into his kingdom: if unconverted and unregenerate men may still, like the one, live without Christ in the world, and leave it without hope in him,—or on the other hand they may see one whose change of heart made him a fit object of mercy, and hear him expire with that happy promise of going with his Saviour into bliss—it is an instance which affords no ground of security to those who go on in the neglect of what is revealed, and would trust to a future or late repentance, but one that does administer comfort to all those that “*with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him*.” For it is a comfort to man to know, when otherwise totally without ground for it, that his repentance shall then through Christ be made available,—that in “*the author and finisher of his faith*,” he may see the “*hand*

writing of ordinances blotted out," —the door to reconciliation unbarred,—the cleansing "*fount for sin and uncleanness set open,*"—it is a great comfort for weak and erring sinful man to be assured that God for Christ's sake will (upon the conditions required,) forgive him; will "wash him from his wickedness, and cleanse him from his sin;" will accept, though it may be late, his penitence, and hear his prayer. Here is the great pledge for it, and the great encouragement to lay hold on it. The death of Christ affords the ground on which we may,—on which every one that is "*convinced of sin,*" may see the proffered terms of pardon, apply to himself individually the great atonement, and blot out his sins, in the blood that "*cleanseth from all sin,*" the blood that flows from his Redeemer's wounded side; let him but read and believe the circumstances of this day's catastrophe, let him follow that Redeemer through all the stages of his mortal humiliation (as predicted by prophecy, as prefigured by types, as fore-ordained from the foundation of the world,) and see the "*Lord of glory,*" veiled under "*the man of sorrows,*" (because he was "*bearing the iniquity of us all,*" because he was "*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,*" because "*he was suffering the just for the unjust,*" that he might "*give himself a ransom for many,*" that he might "*redeem us from all iniquity,*" that he might "*bring*

us to God,") let him but with this belief view him on the cross, and behold as soon as the great sacrifice of it was finished, the earth trembling, the tombs bursting, the veil of the temple rending, and the sanctuary, (that type of the heaven of heavens,) thrown open to all believers, and he can have but little faith or feeling, who in all the awful solemnity of it, owns not the Saviour of the world and prays not earnestly that to himself Christ may be a Saviour.

The very scene might be enough to awaken him, as it did the convert before us. From the manner of his youth upward, he was not likely to have thought much of religion, to have attended to the doctrines of Christ, or been one of those who "*heard him gladly.*" He might have heard of him, and probably he had, for he bore witness to his innocence "*this man hath done nothing worthy of death.*" The first time he saw him, might be when in the act of suffering for the sins of the world; and in that hour, and amidst all the darkness of it, he saw enough to make him feel with the centurion, "*truly this was the Son of God.*" While the partner of his former iniquity was regardless of that meek, that uncomplaining dignity, which the Saviour manifested in all his sufferings, and as unaffected with the sense of his aggravated guilt, as he was regardless of the eternity on which he was about to enter, the penitent saw in Christ the very

remedy which his case required, the means of pardon which else he would not have, the hope of mercy which nothing else could give; he saw under the veil of flesh, that divinity which so soon was to break forth, he acknowledged his Redeemer "thus dying for him" and with him, and rested his hope of salvation on his merits. "Lord, might he not (as is justly said) have urged, Lord I am one of those sinners for whom thy Son is now expiring on the cross. I was conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, and have wandered in ignorance and error without the light of thy gospel to direct, without the help of thy spirit to protect me. Why was my life so dark and these few minutes only blessed with the knowledge of thy truth? Lord, accept my poor remains of life, since it is all I have to offer: my latest breath shall confess my guilt, and my Saviour's innocence, and since thy wisdom hath united me to him in his death, may I never be parted from him more." "*Lord,*" said he, "*remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom,*" and the Lord of that kingdom granted him more than he asked, or knew, "*Verily I say unto thee, to day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*" I dwell not upon the abuse to which this would be turned, if made the plea for the deferring of repentance, and then building on it at the last, — it affords no room for such, — for though we have reason to hope that the benefits of Christ's death may be

extended to those who may not have had the opportunities of his being made known to them, the state of one who never heard of him till the last, applies not to those who have all along had the means of coming to him ; nor are we to expect that the grace of God will work a change when we come to die, if we would not concur with it in the whole course of our lives. But remembering that there is a change which we hope will then have taken place, a state of conversion and contrition of heart in which we must be, ere we can be fitted to see God as he is, or to be "with him where he is," let us consider it as that to which we now are called, let us look to what the doctrine of Christ crucified will at the last supply.

It was the language of Repentance, Faith, and Hope ; and such we should wish to be our state, if no more to return into the world, if now, for the last time, about to partake of the body and blood of Christ, and saying, as he did just before his end, "*I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" We should wish it, surely, to be a state of penitence, for without it how could we, in the sight of God, hope for pardon—before Him we are miserable sinners—we are tied and bound by the chain—before Him we all must plead guilty—of ourselves unable to put in any plea in bar of judgment—self-accused, self-

convicted, self-condemned—we have done amiss and dealt wickedly, must be the language of all—“*the Scripture hath concluded all under sin,*” and repentance for sin, with a sense of our helplessness and need of deliverance, must be the first sentiment of guilty and offending creatures; but will repentance of itself avail? can it annihilate what is past? can it restore the fallen? it may be all we have to offer, but will sorrow for having done amiss undo it—will it cancel our debt—will it turn the crimson dye to white? by faith, in His blood which was shed for you and for many, it may—by faith, which, feeling its own utter incapacity to “*work out its salvation,*” submits itself entirely to the divine covenant, and in the humbled sense of having “no power of itself to help itself,” with fervent thankfulness throws itself upon Him that can—which, in the great doctrine of the cross, finds every natural and unreasonable fear dispelled—every uneasy doubt satisfied—every pious sentiment encouraged—attaching the pardoned offender to God’s service on a principle of love, and shewing him a dying Saviour led “*like a lamb to the slaughter,*” and opening not his mouth, meek even then, and lowly in heart, inviting sinners to come unto Him, and bidding them, through Him, find rest unto their souls! He, that here prayed, did so—as soon as he received the terms of salvation he complied with them, and with

such compunction as would have produced righteousness of life—He believed, “*and by faith He was justified,*” (“being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus,”)—not a barren faith, for its effects were instantly seen—he confessed his own sins, “*we receive the due reward of our deeds,*”—he made an open profession of the Messiah, (no small degree of faith when he saw Him perishing as a malefactor, to all appearance as much forsaken of God as man,) and prayed to Him in that character—he reproved his companion for his hardened iniquity, “*dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation,*”—it was in contrition, in confession, in supplication, and he was promised to be taken into heaven.

Ponder these things whosoever thou art that thinkest upon thy spiritual state, and if when thine heart tells thee what thou art before God, what it cost to redeem a soul (which else thou must let alone for ever, and without such powerful means of deliverance might for ever have been lost,) you find what deep need you have of a redeemer, of “one greater” to restore, of one Almighty to save, look to him who for those purposes did suffer, and in the cross of Christ behold the means, the pledge of it,—“*commune with your own heart*” and it will tell you that the doctrine thereof is true,—“*search out your spirit,*” and all the wounds of it his blood will heal,—think

what was that great design for which all these things were done; what was that Being who here while hanging on the cross, despised and rejected of men, could yet with all the majesty of God absolve from sin, wait only till all was finished, till he exchanged 'the' crown of thorns for that of glory, return to that glory which he had with the Father before the world began, and bear the penitent companion of his last agonies to Paradise. Let none presume, let none despair, doth any one despise the riches of such goodness, such inestimable love, and is not led by it to repentance, let him pray for grace that he may be awakened, lest his hardness and impenitent heart should be treasuring up unto itself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; lest for him Christ should have died in vain, lest in his last moments he should have no hope left; doth any on the contrary, knowing the danger of sin, and seeing this tremendous visitation for it, fear for what his own might deserve, and doubt how such a sinner as himself can be forgiven, let him not be discouraged, for mercy is never denied to those who truly repent and humble themselves at the foot of the cross; he may, indeed, smite upon his breast and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," let him look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, and hear to his comfort, the words which that Redeemer spake to the last penitent,

“*to day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,*” not remembered by him only, but in some way suited to the nature of the unembodied spirit beholding his presence, and deriving from it unspeakable satisfaction and delight. “*To day*” (and this day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,) “*to day,*” therefore, they who die in the Lord as soon as they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity, to receive perhaps new accessions of glory, “at the resurrection of the just,”—to day shalt thou be with me; they, therefore, see him as he is; he is visibly amongst them, he is “the Lamb in the midst, feeding them, and leading them, unto living fountains,”—and “in Paradise,” these are they who have passed from death unto life, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,—they hunger no more, nor thirst any more, God hath wiped away tears from their eyes.

Merciful are those hopes which thus in a mediator and redeemer, and in a suffering one, are held out to sinful creatures; bright are those prospects which tell them that when “*their warfare is accomplished their iniquity may be pardoned,*” and open anew the kingdom of Heaven to all believers;—we feel them not perhaps, we magnify not the greatness of them as we ought: yet a moment shall come when we shall see them in all their reality, may we feel them in all their

mercy. When the pains and sorrows (may it not be the sins) of this life are ending,—when this world is fading on our sight, and we are about to enter on that unknown and untried world, in which the unencumbered spirit soon shall be,—when eternity is at hand, and all its consequences for pardoned, or for unpardoned sin about to be experienced;—Lord do thou remember me, *remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom*, may be the prayer of each; spare us Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee, but spare all thy people, spare thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood; make them to be *numbered with thy Saints, in glory everlasting.*

SERMON VIII.

E A S T E R D A Y .

I CORINTHIANS V. 7 & 8.

“ Christ our passover is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

THE passover of the Jews was an annual festival appointed by God himself, in remembrance of a singular mercy which he had vouchsafed unto their forefathers,—and it was observed with great solemnity by the whole nation, the season of it was a joyful one,—“ *that Sabbath day was an high day,*” and people flocked from every part of Judea to keep it (where only it could be kept,) at Jerusalem ; it was so ordained in order to perpetuate a sacramental memorial, that “ *when your children shall say unto you what mean ye by*

this service," ye may refer them to the original fact, as well as to the author of it, and say "*it is the Lord's passover.*"

The deliverance it commemorated was, as we have heard, briefly this: when the children of Israel had been for a long time oppressed by the Egyptians, in bondage to them, and "evil entreated," and the latter (in spite of all the plagues which God had inflicted,) had hardened their hearts and put to death all the male children of Israel, the Lord determined to send a most signal judgment, (one of those retributive visitations which in the course of his providence we see occasionally take place,) one also in some sort resembling the nature of their crime, and to "*destroy all the first-born in the land of Egypt.*"

But that the Israelites might escape, it was thus commanded them—"in the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb—without blemish—a male of the first year—and shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month—and shall kill it in the evening—and they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the house wherein they eat it—in one house shall it be eaten,—neither shall ye break a bone thereof,"—the minuteness of the directions preserved the exact observance of it—and in every particular it was marked, "*not cut in pieces but roast with fire,*"—the very mode of doing it was prescribed, "*and thus shall ye eat,—*"

with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs,—with your loins girded,—your shoes on your feet, (contrary to their usual custom in eating,) and your staff in your hand,”—the effect was promised, viz. “the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,—and this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations,—and ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.” Of the fulfilment of this we have also read,—for when the night drew on, the last night of servitude to the people of Israel, a night of unprecedented horror to the ancient kingdom of Egypt, “*it came to pass that at midnight, the Lord smote all the first-born in the Land of Egypt,—from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of the cattle,—there was not an house where there was not one dead,—but the Israelites went forth under the hand of the Lord.*”

Now this their manifest and miraculous deliverance under his hand they were commanded to commemorate by this remarkable institution, and it was “*observed for an ordinance to them and to their sons for ever ;*” they kept it with religious and scrupulous exactness : it was cherished and regarded in all vicissitudes of their nation,—it

was the rite which our Saviour kept with his disciples, the very night before he suffered,—it is that of which he was himself the object and the accomplishment,—it is that which the unconverted Jew still in his manner keeps, and when the substance of it is seen, clings to the shadow. For this, (as the Apostle said of all the law,) was “*but a shadow of things to come*,” a type, a figure, of the true,—a representation of some greater mercy intended and effected by the Almighty for the deliverance of his creatures whereby they should be released from a greater bondage, viz. that of sin and death, and brought into the glorious privilege of the children of God. St. Paul himself marks the designation, “*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*,” here is the archetype, and here is its fulfilment, shewing that our deliverance is owing to him,—that in some corresponding sense, our sins, through him, are passed over, just as by means of the Paschal Lamb, the dwellings of the children of Israel were,—that the latter was intended as a sign of protection, in reference to which the former also is called “*the blood of sprinkling*,”—it may not be necessary nor possible for us to know, (“we know not,” neither doth it concern us to know,) in what manner the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins, but it is impossible to read the scriptures without seeing that he hath been that species of sacrifice to Christians which the passover was to

the Jews,—and it is enough for us to know that this is declared by God to be the medium through which salvation is effected,—the Almighty needed not the mark of the blood on the door posts, to enable him to distinguish between the Egyptians and the Israelites, for the words in Exodus are “*it shall be to you for a token,*” it was a sensible token of the fulfilment of the divine promise of protection and deliverance,—and in the same way are we “*signed with the sign of the cross in baptism,*” marked as it were “*a peculiar people,*” expecting redemption from him who hath appointed us by the observance, and through faith in his sacrifice, to apply it to ourselves, and taught us by virtue of that sacrifice to hope for it. The analogy is so strong, both as to the offering itself and to the ordinance in token of it, that we ought to dwell upon it: and what is the strong light in which the scriptures uniformly represent our Saviour, in which at this season they so peculiarly and affectingly set him before us, but as a lamb,—and that, not only as the emblem of meek and uncomplaining resignation to suffering and death, but (as he was first hailed by the Baptist,) *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,*—and understood to be possessed of some similar or corresponding virtue, such as Peter alludes to when he says, “*Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, (as of a Lamb,) who verily was foreordained before the*

foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

It is the figure under which he is most frequently spoken of, in allusion to the paschal one; and in many respects circumstantially agreeing. "*Your lamb shall be without blemish,*" was the direction for the choosing of it; and St. Peter saith of Christ, "*as of a Lamb without spot or blemish.*" In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb,—at that time, and on that day, was our Saviour separated as it were for his sacrifice and led up to Jerusalem, because the "*passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*" "*Ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day, and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it in the evening,*"—in what they reckoned their evening to begin at, in the same month, the same day, and about the same hour, was the Saviour of the world crucified: "*about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.*" "*Neither shall ye break a bone thereof,*" was the first direction: "*and the soldiers came and break the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs,*"—that the scripture, saith the Apostle, that this scripture might be fulfilled which saith "*a bone of him shall not be broken.*"

And to the end that we should alway remember

the exceeding great love of our master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us, he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, so that “when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? ye shall say, “it is the Lord’s passover,”—it is the token of that deliverance which was wrought for us men and for our salvation, whereby we were delivered from that bondage and corruption under which mankind doth otherwise lie, that they may be reminded of him who hath done so great things for them, of the great duties which thence they owe,—that they may teach their children the same, and keep up the memorial of those mercies “*whereby alone they can be saved.*”

Different are the sentiments which mercies occasion, different the sensations with which they are received, and that in proportion to the sense we entertain of them; the less our hope, the more joyful are the good feelings of escape; the greater our danger, the more welcome is our rescue; “*the captive exile*” looks to the day which endeth his captivity; the “*prisoner of hope*” turns unto Him that can loose his bands; the weary to Him that bringeth rest; the “*heavy-laden*” to Him that easeth his burden; those that are sick to one who healeth; those that mourn to one that comforts them; we look up to

God with words of thankfulness on every occasion of worldly deliverance, if we were “*in a low estate*” and He “*regarded us* ;” if we were in trouble and He saved us ; if in the course of His providence we experience those unexpected changes and deliverances in which his hand is manifestly seen—those of old did so—they kept the feast of the passover—for their being saved from a temporal death, inflicted on some thousands—how far short in extent, in magnitude, and in consequence, fall all such comparisons with the deliverance of all mankind from eternal death—with that mercy which restores to them their forfeited hopes, and leaves them not subject to that sentence, under which they might for ever have remained—which shews them the everlasting Son of the Father “*taking upon Him to deliver man, and when He had overcome the sharpness of death, opening the kingdom of Heaven to all believers*,”—how far short, too, might their gratitude and adoration fall of ours, appearing before Him to glorify Him. not only for “our creation, our preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory,”—the hope that we, who now assemble before Him, praising God for the mighty prospect, (as well as those who have departed this life in his faith,) though we

taste of death, and sleep awhile in the cold arms of it, shall not be left under its power, but by his mighty power shall be revived; "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him, for in that He died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God—and likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." How manifold, how glorious are the prospects which this belief at once opens to us—what a different turn does it give, what a different view of the things of this world—of life itself—nay, more, of death—how in the thought, and in the bitterness of it, which now is passed, we may, indeed, with triumph say, "*O! death, where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory?*"

It is in commemoration of him who hath taken away its sting and given us the victory that on the great day of his resurrection we meet to praise him for it; and it is scarce necessary to observe again that the institution of the Lord's supper, was by himself appointed as the feast of the christian passover, this (instead of former offerings) is my body which was broken; this is

my blood of the New Testament. We might but advert to one or two circumstances in the original rite which in the offering and case of the Israelites every christian may in the service of the day apply unto himself. They were to do it "*while they were oppressed,*" and when oppressed with any plague or trouble, what so relieves it, as the views which therein are opened of the merciful Redeemer of mankind, and of all which we expect through him,—what so assuages it, as the thought of being guided by his grace through the wilderness, if yet longer to stay in this land of sojourn, and of being hereafter admitted to a state, with the glory of which the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared, and for which they may be necessary,—that if Christ entered not into glory before he suffered, he hath consecrated that way by which many must still, but that if we be (in heart) dead with him, we shall also live with him, if we suffer we shall also reign with him; the accepted in Christ are described, as those who, having come out of great tribulation, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb, and his presence forms their bliss, "*the lamb which is in the midst, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*"

They were to observe it as a mark of protection

when the destroying angel was to go forth, and when they heard of the method of deliverance, "*the people bowed the head and worshipped.*" And when the arm and sword of the Lord shall again be revealed, when, in his great and terrible day, he shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other, what else shall be the covenanted refuge for those who could not otherwise abide the day of his coming, what the mark by which they may be passed over, saved from the death which else had been denounced, and raised unto life—what to hide sin from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, but his blood which was shed for it?

Lastly, they were to eat it with their shoes upon their feet and their staff in their hand, as if soon to go forth. And in the prospect of soon going forth,—of going to that land whither all are hastening, and to which none know how soon they may be called—in that is signified and represented the hope of all—for it is a path in which the Saviour himself has gone before, and whose love will guide them through the gloom,—death is not one dark interminable gloom—it opens not an undiscovered but a "better country," "a promised land," an eternal Canaan of rest, to which he will conduct, and where he will receive them—

where they that “die in the Lord,” are thenceforth “blessed,” and where the souls of the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity,—if about to enter it ye would be glad to lay hold on the promises of God and pray to him, who, in the hour of it, could deliver you,—if you have witnessed the departure of others, ye thought of him who could, —of Him, into whose hands you could commit them, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection,—of Him, by whose blood ye hoped that both you and they would be saved,—of Him, who was the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sins of the world, —who by his death, hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life.

With angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we might laud and magnify Him, for these are the greatest of all hopes, and think upon the terms on which alone, we reasonably may have them,—think who may be partakers of that state,—but who may not;—we have a passover, Christ is our passover, we meet in deep and heartfelt thankfulness to keep it,—we may, if we are found worthy to be partakers of it, meet in the glorious consummation of it; I can but pray God that we may do so, I can but pray to him in the words of our fine collect, to grant to us all that *as we are baptised into Christ's*

death, so by continually mortifying our corrupt affections, we may 'be buried with him, and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to a joyful resurrection, through him who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON ·IX.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1 JOHN III. 2.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

THE resurrection of our Saviour, so wonderful and important to us in every view, is in nothing more so than in the future likeness to Him which we are taught to expect from it. The grandest notion we can form of the Gospel is that of its being intended to impart to man the attributes of God, fitting him for His presence, and leading him towards it; of its creating the soul anew in holiness, after the image of Christ Jesus, in order to make it capable of eternal happiness; of its here affording him the means of grace, as a preparation for future glory. The

great feature of it is, accordingly, that of Christ's dying, in order to restore us to that immortality which had been forfeited, and hereafter to come and take us to Himself; that as his human body after his resurrection was glorified, fitted for Heaven, and taken to it, so, through Him, may ours. "*Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more,*" neither shall "*they that are Christ's;*" they shall be delivered from that second death—He shall quicken them by his power, He will ransom them from the grave, He will raise them up at the last day—"the Lord himself," we read, "*shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first—then they which are alive shall be caught up together with Him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so shall we be ever with the Lord.*" Of such a state we can know but little; he that would know the glories of it, must first be admitted to them, and should some angel from Heaven discourse on them we still might want "*ears to hear;*" but thus much we know, that "*when He shall appear,*" we (by some mighty, but inconceivable change,) "*shall be like Him,*"—that they, who here seek to be conformed to his human nature, shall, by His all-mighty power, hereafter be made partakers of his divine—that they, who here lay hold on his atonement, and live by faith of the Son of God, shall, by his mysterious

intercession, be cleansed from all sin; and though, by the law of their nature, and in consequence of transgression, they lie down in the grave, be "*made alive,*" and that when "*Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with Him in glory.*"

Such, at least, is the representation of that life and immortality which the Gospel hath brought to light, and which He hath restored; such the state to which every Christian, through the merits of his Redeemer, is made heir to; such the hope which every real Christian is taught to entertain—and it is a very cheering one! All that this world can offer is not to be weighed against it: all that the most exalted can claim, or the most prosperous enjoy, come not in competition with it. All the joys, nay, all "*the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed,*"—we shall enter on some new and untried state of being—"this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must first put on immortality, and we shall be changed!" Here, indeed, as in everything else, we must "*walk by faith, not by sight,*" happy enough, if we are led by what is seen to what is not seen, from "*things temporal to things eternal.*" We may neither have words to express, nor ideas to conceive it, and God doth not mean to gratify the fruitless curiosity of the inquisitive, but to relieve the

disquiet of those who want to be assured. The Christian that with holy thought and ardent desire, looks toward it, and in his pilgrimage abstains from all that may impede his course as he journeys thitherward, may, like the chosen Israelite from the top of Pisgah, have some faint prospect of the promised land, some foretaste of that rest which, like the Almighty, none can "*see and live*,"—but that is the utmost that belongs to mortality—we can but talk of what we never saw, and disparage the state which we seek to recommend, and we may remain thankful that the bar to our entrance thereunto is removed, that through Him, "*who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*," death, which had passed on all, is done away, and that there is "*opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers*," although (in the sublime simplicity of Scripture,) "*eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him*."

The belief of this is meant to enforce that purity which all the doctrines of the gospel represent as necessary in order to be partakers of it, "every man that really hath this hope purifies himself even as He is pure," and to the wicked it affords no hope, even Heaven itself might give them no enjoyment, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, what com-

munition hath light with darkness, what concord hath Christ with Belial?" and if men must appear and give an account of the deeds done in the body, what must theirs demand? But in every point of view it is most interesting—it is an alarming truth to the impenitent—it is an animating prospect to the righteous—it is a consoling thought to the afflicted. For herein is traced at once the maze and intricacy of those plans, which otherwise we are not able to unravel. Herein are unfolded the tendencies and the termination of those transactions, of which at present we see but a part, for herein we see that the great, the mighty object is beyond—that we have here "*no abiding city*," but that our great business is to "*seek one to come*,"—that though it doth not appear what we shall be, (for then there would be no further room for faith or virtue,) there appears enough to shew man what is his interest, what may be his condition, and by what means he may (under the grace of God,) raise himself unto an higher order of beings, and even be made like unto God.

These are thoughts which raise and cheer us, which cheer the moments of sorrow and make affliction smile—which teach her to look to the end of all, and be less regardless of the way by which it is attained, though that way be beset with sorrows, and watered with tears; for if it lead but to that blessed end, if it turn those

hearts to God which otherwise might not have known him, if it lead those that do know him to still nearer intercourse, and is the means of perfecting righteousness, if, in short, we learn even here, to see God as he is, we become at once resigned, and cheerfully so, we look up not only with resignation but with reverence, trust, and hope, and are ready to wait for that future disclosure, when all the mysteries of reason and of religion shall be made plain, when to his servants the Almighty will stand revealed, as all his works (seen or unseen,) are yet appointed in mercy and in love! The ways of Providence will be then made known, "*the crooked ways straight, and the rough places plain,*" and we shall perceive and know that the wisdom and goodness of God, is a vast and comprehensive thing, and moves in a far larger sphere than we are aware of in this state of narrowness and imperfection. When the scales fall off our eyes, we shall see how the Almighty would have led us toward one great end, and "*made all things work together for it;*" all his dispensations we shall then behold, (as he did all the works of his hand at first,) to be "*very good,*" and the wonders of creation, preservation, and redemption shall be seen as the different parts of one stupendous plan contrived to bring his creatures, through the merits of a Redeemer, (those at least who love and obey him,) to eternal happiness, making his own

perfections and their likeness to them, the cause and the source of it—they are here to be “perfect even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect,” to be “regenerate and renewed in their minds,” to delight in what he delights in, to “grow in grace,” to be made daily more and more like unto Him, till they are changed into “the very likeness of Him they look upon.” Derived from God, to him the spirit tends; it here rises towards Him in devotion, it rises—but faintly—it is to shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of the Father—it now seeth Him as “through a glass darkly,” it then will see Him “face to face:” it now knoweth by faith, what in full majesty it shall see disclosed, “*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*” This, may in an inferior degree, constitute the happiness of the righteous after the universal resurrection, for “in his presence is the fulness of joy,” and the Scriptures seem to imply it when they speak of the future state of such. Placed above the reach of evil, and purified by the very troubles they have endured, the just are represented as safe for ever from the dominion of sin and suffering: as having exchanged misery for blessedness, temptation for security, and faith for certainty. “*They are before the throne of God day and night.*” “*These are they*

which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It is consolatory to mortal creatures, to be certified of such a state; to live under the persuasion that there is such a condition of human beings approaching, which as Christians they may aspire to, and which is as certain as the faithfulness of God. It is enough to compensate every sorrow of this life, its infirmities and disappointments; it revives the spirit of man to look, with faith and hope, beyond the shifting and clouded scenes of mortality, to that final result and end of them—to the pure and permanent happiness which we are taught to expect, as the ultimate effect of the vicissitudes and the discipline experienced in this present state—to our association with those, who having "*fought the good fight, and finished their course,*" are now with the innumerable company of angels before the presence of their Father, and who now seem to say from Heaven, that if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him, that if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. It dissipates the gloom that hangs over many things in this world, and disarms what is naturally the enemy of man—it might lessen the too great hold which otherwise they might take, and place in their real light, many of those objects which occupy and engross it here—it sets in the most awful view the soul of man, when in a fallen and

hopeless state, when forfeit and dead in trespasses and sins, restored by the precious blood of Christ to "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled*;" here in a state of probation, but proceeding, like the path of the just, "*unto the perfect day*;" here, in its infancy, but going on from strength to strength, "*adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge*," and to shine for ever, hereafter, with new accessions of glory—it softens that to which we here are else "*in bondage*," the fear of death—taking away its bitterness, brightening its darkness, shewing the grave to be but "*the gate*," the entrance, through which we pass to life—that nothing ceases but our earthly part, and that the soul shall live for ever!

What shall be its state there? what should be its present one?—one of preparation for it—of habitual regard to it—of constant aspiration towards it—of a taste for those "*pleasures which are at God's right hand*." All that He commands here to be done is with a reference to that state. The employments, the duties, the desires of good men, all are to relate to the world to come, and are designed to fit them for occupations or for enjoyments much more refined and excellent, but not entirely dissimilar in their nature—"just men made perfect,"—the seeds, which here were planted, brought to light—the virtues, which here were cherished, expanding—the reward

according to past service, and their peculiar joys resulting from the progress and perfection of the same Christian character which distinguished them in this present life.

The manner in which we are to exist after the resurrection may have a stronger analogy to our present condition, than at present we are aware of—but, if this is the preparation for another state, “*whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap;*” and though troubles cannot, their virtues will follow the good beyond the grave, and go with them into Heaven; death, which separates all other bonds, cannot dissolve that; “*Christ*” saith the Apostle, “*is our life,*” by Him it is to be guided, in Him it consists, and they, in whom it does, shall live with Him; they, who here “*follow His blessed steps,*” and do bring forth the fruits of his Spirit, “*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith—they that are Christ’s, and have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,*” are especially fitted for those mansions (and it is the qualification for them,) into which nothing else can ever enter, in which each may find his kindred spirits, and dwell in everlasting purity and love. It is a consolation to believe that the good affections which we here are careful to cultivate, may be renewed and revived in a greater degree than what we are capable of exercising here—that they who have been taken away from us, “*in that they died they died unto*

sin once, but in that they live, they are living unto God, that them which sleep in Jesus, shall God bring with him ;" that they may be restored to us in a brighter form—and that they who are still endeared to us by the ties and sympathies of this present life, may, with us, be "*partakers of the glory hereafter to be revealed.*"

If, then, in the belief of an higher, of a glorified state, (and what can be so deeply interesting,) if, unto this faith, ye have been baptized, if in thought "*ye be risen with Christ,*" seek those things which are above—"set your affections on things above, not on things upon the earth." Think of Heaven, of Him who purchased Heaven for thee, and of where He "*sitteth at the right hand of God,*"—of that world, invisible indeed, but which one day, or hour, may bring you to, where (you trust,) that they "*who have departed this life*" are, and where, when your time is come, you hope that you shall be also. Think that you now have it in your power to be happy ages hence—that when we and our remotest posterity shall have been long forgotten, when this earth itself, and, perhaps, a long succession of other worlds shall have come to an end—we shall still be living, still sensible of pleasure or pain, to a greater degree, perhaps, than our present nature admits of, and still having no shorter space of existence before us than at first,—that you are capable of a never-ending

perfection, and of a glory which exceeds all that you can at present imagine. Think that "*when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, ye may also appear with Him in glory,*"—"that though it may not yet appear what we shall be, when He shall appear we shall be like Him, and see Him as He is,"—that if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

"It is an awakening, it is an elevating doctrine ! May the conviction of it sanctify our hearts, and we, who pray for its blessedness, meet together in its enjoyment.

SERMON X.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

LUKE XXIV. 13-16.

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village, called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.”

As the resurrection of our Saviour is the cornerstone of our faith, the foundation on which the Christian Church is built, it has pleased the Almighty that it should be certified by many and infallible proofs—there is hardly any other fact so strongly attested; and the evidence of those who saw and conversed with him after he had risen

from the dead, would be admitted, even if scrutinized in a court of justice, as irrefragable; but there is to every candid and believing mind, a still stronger proof, arising from the internal evidence, that scripture was given by inspiration, and that the writers of the Gospel spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, namely, the simplicity and truthfulness which appears in them throughout, and which is plain to every one that reads. In every artless narrative this is seen, and it is in that from which the text is taken; let us, imploring the divine aid, consider it, and may God grant us to consider and profit by it as we ought.

Our Saviour was, we know, crucified at the passover, a time at which multitudes were assembled at Jerusalem from all parts of the nation. His death had caused a very general sensation; his not being found in the tomb which had been sealed and watched, one still greater—the cause of triumph to his enemies, of grief and disappointment to his disciples, “*and behold two of his disciples went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which is from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs:*” who they were is not stated; they are supposed to have been the two who had before gone to the sepulchre, and who not finding the body of Jesus, but “*the linen clothes wrapt up and laid by themselves,*” had gone away again unto their own homes, wondering at what had come

to pass—they might be glad to be together, and as when some friend is lately gone, we like to meet with those that loved them, to talk of them, to dwell upon all their virtues, and the manner and habits of their life, and all the circumstances of their death, so “they (naturally) talked together of all these things which had happened.”

And it came to pass that he whom lately they saw dead, could here resolve them; “*it came to pass that while they communed together, and reasoned,*” Jesus perceiving their weakness (pitying it perhaps) their willing-to-be-instructed faith, and their need of having it confirmed, “*Jesus himself drew near and went with them,—but their eyes were holden that they should not know him,*”—thus is his protection always exerted towards us, when we think not of it, thus is he ever present with us, though not seen.

But he may try our faith, enlighten our understanding, confirm us amidst our doubtings, and comfort us under our griefs; and with any, or all these views, “*he said unto them, what manner of communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk, and are sad?*” And, as when the heart is full, it is glad to unload itself, and when it knows its own bitterness, thinks that every one must know it too, “*one of them answering said unto him, art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days concerning*

Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers have delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him?"—and then, as in every narrative of the kind, breaks in some fresh circumstance of sorrow, some hope that had been cherished and was gone—"but we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"—"and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done;" and a recollection of some before-forgotten trait, some promise with some doubt, some hope that still it might be fulfilled,—*"yea, and certain women of our company made us astonished which were early at the sepulchre, and when they found not his body they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive—and certain of them, who were with us, went to the sepulchre and found it even so as the women had said, but Him they saw not."*

When we are deeply wounded by some visitation, or "*oppressed with any trouble,*" how quick are the alternations of hope and fear; how, when we had well-nigh reasoned ourselves into a belief of the fitness and an acquiescence in the appointment of it, we relapse; and till we have fixed our anchor on the word of God are driven by every wave and tossed! how often need we to be referred to those words of our Saviour, "*O*

weak and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things and entered into glory;" and slow to believe all that God hath spoken may we often be! ought not, (might he say, when we, too, are cast down at some affliction, at some loss,) ought not, perhaps, these things to be? may they not be sent by Providence? necessary, perhaps, in the great order of things which its wisdom sees fit to take place? Is it not written that "*offences and trials needs must come,*" but that "*blessed is he that endureth to the end.*" Is that end always seen? And if the promise of God cannot fail, can we not trust him "*till the end cometh*"? Must not we suffer before we enter into glory, and may not the Almighty make as wonderful and joyful a termination to what we think as sad and mournful a dispensation? He shewed them the prediction and the necessity of all these things, for "*beginning at Moses, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself;*" and there too might we (if the confirming of our faith were necessary) seek the proofs of it, and find throughout such continued and repeated ones, such striking prophecies, such types, such declarations of the incarnation, offices, sufferings and death of the Messiah, as to enforce again and again the firm conviction "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world!"

We may conceive that they then peculiarly “heard him gladly” when “he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures,” for we willingly listen to those who are able to inform us upon momentous points, and who enter (more especially when afflicted) into all our feelings—they drew nigh (sooner possibly than they were aware,) to the end of their journey, they “drew nigh unto the village whither they went,” and when Jesus “made as though he would have gone further” they were unwilling to let him go, they “constrained him, saying, abide with us for it is towards evening and the day is far spent, and he went in to tarry with them.” And thus, ever if we are wishing to know more of our duty, the means of it are always afforded us; if we ask for and desire to “grow in grace,” it is vouchsafed us; if we labour to acquaint ourselves with God, and ask for the communication of his Holy Spirit, he takes up his abode and dwells with us. *

‘ He had now prepared the minds of the disciples for what before they might not so properly have received; he had taught them to search for and to find in the Scriptures the signs of himself, and convinced them, by their reason, of what he was now to reveal to the testimony of their senses. He “*went in and sat down with them.*”

One of the last acts of His life (before His crucifixion,) had been the institution of the

sacrament ; “ *the same night that he was betrayed he took bread ;* ” on every account it was likely to have made a deep impression on them ; the last acts, (the religious ones more especially,) of those who are gone usually do ; the very form, the very manner, the tone, the expression of observing it, are remembered—well, then, might those of Him, who “ *spake as never man spake,* ”—and when, here again, (as He sat at meat,) “ *he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave unto them,—their eyes were opened and they knew Him,* ”—but now that He had risen, his address, his converse with them was not as heretofore, it was continued no longer than was necessary, it was only to declare that it was He, and he vanished out of their sight ! “ And they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? ”—seemed there not something that did affect in an unusual way, and might have been sufficient to shew who it was that talked with us ! They then thought that they had not been before disposed towards him as they ought ; that they had not profited by Him who for a time had been vouchsafed unto them ; that they should even then have known him ; but they were struck with joyful astonishment when they did know him ; they hastened to impart it ; they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven

gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, the Lord is risen ^{indeed}, and hath appeared unto Simon ! And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread !

The chapter goes on to relate how at another time also, as they spake, Jesus again stood in the midst of them, and said, "*peace be unto you,*"—now when they were affrighted, he bid them not be troubled—now he shewed them his hands and his feet, that it was himself; and in order to do away the possibility of doubt "did eat before them." He also said "these are the things which I spake unto you while I was yet with you that all things must be fulfilled." In order to confirm these things was his appearance to them, after he had risen from the dead,—he was seen "at sundry times, and in divers manners," in houses or by the way, singly or collectively at Jerusalem, at Emmaus, at Galilee, by Cephas, by the twelve, and after that of above five hundred brethren at once; he was not indeed seen by all the people, they had not believed him before, they might not now; he was now declared to be "the Son of God with power" and the teachable and the pure in heart only were to see him.

As an evidence of the resurrection it was irrefragable; it was the same body, "handle me and see;" there were the print of the nails, the wound of the spear, and the faithless Apostle

could thrust his hand into his side. As a proof of the Redeemer's power it was as plain: He had laid down his life, and had taken it up again; He had promised to "go before them into Galilee," after He was risen from the dead, and there He met them. As a sign of his divinity it, moreover, seemed intended: Angels did appear to witness his resurrection; one had rolled away the stone, but it was only to shew those, who came to the sepulchre, that He was risen, the Lord had left it before. He appeared to His disciples, He did to those going to Emmaus, like a traveller by the way-side, in order to prepare them, by his conversation, for what followed; but no sooner was the discovery made than He instantly vanished from their sight. The same evening He presented Himself to the Apostles, at a late hour, assembled in a room, "with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews;" but to him who had departed from the unopened sepulchre, it was no difficulty to enter the fastened chamber, "and Jesus stood in the midst."

His appearances were for the most part sudden and unforeseen, nor less suddenly did he disappear. He was found in the company without coming in, he was missing again without going away. He was repeatedly seen by his disciples, and so as to give them undoubted proofs that it was the very Jesus who had suffered on the cross, but he lived not with them in the same familiar

habits as before, they knew not his going out or his coming in. He seemed like the inhabitant of another region, from which He came occasionally to converse with His disciples; and if the scheme of redemption seemed to require that in the Redeemer's appearance before the crucifixion, "the form of a servant should be the predominant, after His resurrection it was the form of God:" and there seemed accordingly a difference and change throughout. There was no longer the easy intercourse of his former life; they seemed afraid to address Him, and there was in His deportment, a dignity, an authority, and in His words a mysteriousness; "touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father," but go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I "ascend unto my Father, and your Father, unto my God, and your God."¹ It seemed indeed as if the body had undergone its change, risen indeed, but become that body which St. Paul describes (1 Cor. xv.) "the corruptible putting on incorruption; no longer the body of man in its mortal state, but of one raised to life and immortality, and now united to divinity. And when the disciples repaired to Galilee where He had appointed to meet them, and they saw Him ascend into Heaven, and received up into glory, they worshipped Him.

St. Paul heard His voice from Heaven, saying,

¹ Bp. Horsley.

“I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;” Himself, in the Revelations, said, “I am He that was dead, and is alive again—and have the keys of hell and death”—and St. Stephen, as they stoned him, “saw the Heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”.

It is a pledge of our own resurrection, when He shall change our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body, and it may suggest three occasions on which His disciples might still hope for the presence of their Lord.

He had said, “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you,” and in the likeness of the vine and its branches, the good shepherd and his sheep, the head and its members, shews how that vital intercourse may be obtained and perfected. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me, I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Again, “I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine, and I lay down my life for the sheep,” he is known of them and with them; and if they do hear the heavenly shepherd’s voice, and follow it, are studious to take the path in which he leads by the still waters, and to adorn the doctrine of their Lord and Saviour in all things, walking in the steps which he has set before them, looking towards him continually, and talking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of

heaven, there may happen to them, as it did to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, Jesus himself though as yet they knew him not, Jesus himself, may draw nigh and go with them.

He may be present with us in our devotions ; we ask in them that He would be, and we may then be best fitted to receive, and He most willing to impart his grace ; when our souls are lifted up to God in prayer, they may be most open to His gracious communication ; “ where two or three,” said he, “ are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them ; ” He may be more especially in that rite which Himself ordained ; it is then that we seem more sensible to divine truths, to discover fresh views of his glory and goodness, and to receive from Him fresh strength to glorify his name ; it is then that his words and sufferings seem more vividly impressed ; we seem to hear Him say the very words, “ take eat, this is my body,” and to devout believers He may again be known unto them in the breaking of bread. There is one season more at which a true disciple will devoutly and most thankfully believe that his Saviour is with him, viz. that season when he will have no other refuge to fly unto, no rock to rest upon, when he is on the verge of eternity, and gladly say—

Jesus, thy heavenly radiance shed
To cheer and bless my dying bed ;
And from death's gloom my spirit raise
To see thy face and sing thy praise.

How many at that hour have been consoled with the thought, seemed to see the Heavens open, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; how many have felt the blessed hope of being safe in His hands* and love, and thought that it was better to depart and be with Christ: it is a hope beyond all others, a peace which passeth all understanding, it is the end to secure which should be the object of our whole life; to be able then to say, with an early martyr to the faith, "I have served thee, I have loved thee, and now I come unto thee;"¹ with another pious soul,² "I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for His merits who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners;" or with St. Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

¹ Polycarp.

² Hooker.

SERMON XI.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GENESIS II. 7.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

MAN consists of two parts, body and soul—a visible and an invisible part—a mortal an immortal one. In the beginning, when the Almighty created the world, he gave to everything its proper nature, the earth to be, the herb to grow, the lower creatures to live; but growth, and sense, and reason, were all summed up in man—He breathed into his nostrils not only the breath of life, but "man became a living soul." "God" saith Solomon, "created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity;" he gave him capacities and desires,

he gave him hopes and fears consistent with it—and when those hopes were forfeit, when man made himself mortal by sin, “God created him anew in Christ Jesus.” We bear within us an imperishable principle which cannot be destroyed but by the same Almighty power that gave it, and will not be destroyed except by that second death which sin may bring; it will exist in an eternal state of happiness or of woe, according as it is found, or is not found, in Christ—and though our bodies may lie down in the grave, our immaterial, our immortal part shall, through our Redeemer’s merits, never die; we have each the gift of individual being, we have each a soul which is to be saved.

There is no thought more wonderful; and as there is none in which the mind of man can be more interested, let us consider how, in ourselves, we feel the divinity within us—and how the immortality of it accords with all our purest hopes and expectations, and how it is confirmed by the Gospel.

Now when we turn our eyes inward, and reflect upon ourselves, we feel within us a vital principle, not only giving life and motion to our frame; not only that by which “we live, and move, and have our being,” but thinking, acting, and reasoning, telling us oft (and sadly,) that the good which we should we do not, and the evil which we would not that we do, governing

and directing us. We cannot tell how it is exerted, or how it is united with the body, but we feel its influence in every moment and action of our lives ; it is independent of the body, and employs itself without its assistance ; when the body is most weak the soul often is most strong ; when the body wants repose the soul often continues in action ; when the powers of the body are weakening by sickness or by age, the soul, through all the changes of its outward shell, remains the same, or seems often to grow stronger and brighter as those powers decay ; as the outward man decays, the inner man is oft renewed day by day, gathering fresh strength as its earthly companion approaches towards its end ; different in their natures, they would seem so in their destiny—and even from this we might infer that death might have no other effect upon the soul than that of separating it from the tabernacle of the flesh, and that it might continue to exist and think when the body is reduced to dust.

And if we consider the excellent faculties of the human soul, that it is endued with the God-like powers of reason and reflection—thinking, and conscious that it thinks—a spring, whose waters fail not—a fountain of thought that ceases not to flow—an intelligence that is always at work—that it can treasure up in memory what is no longer seen, and carry its views and hopes forward to futurity ; that it can comprehend and

reason upon every object which is presented to it, and even on what has no existence but of its own formation—that the mind, which in the infant is as a spark scarcely to be seen, can be quickened and trained up to fathom the depths of science, to raise itself to the knowledge of all things, nay, even to the knowledge, the love, and to the communion of Him, who is the Creator of all things, and by the increase of wisdom, and virtue, and holiness, be capable of becoming “but little lower than the angels;” it seems hardly probable that a being, possessed of such astonishing powers as these, should be designed for this life only, be sent thus provided into the world to live for a few years, often in anxiety and wretchedness, and then to perish for ever! In all other parts of creation each animal is furnished with such powers as are sufficient for the end for which it was made, soon attains all the perfection of which it was capable, and goes not beyond. Man begins from as low a point, but “there is no end of his greatness:” born, at first, weak and helpless, indebted to the care of others for the very preservation of his being, destitute of the faintest trace of reason or intelligence, without the smallest strength of body or light of mind, he struggles up through a long course of discipline and care, becomes the very creature that he makes himself, or is made by others, (and according to that care and discipline,

varying each from other almost as much as man does from the brute,) and comes, at last, to be Lord of all!

And after this, after he is raised so high, must he stop and go no higher? "having understanding and being in honor" is he to "be compared unto the beasts that perish? with affection to cheer, with love to warm, with hope to animate, with powers which he is taught to cultivate, with salvation which he is commanded to work out, is this the end of man? with faculties greatly above his condition here, is he never to exert them? with reason capable of knowing God, shall it know him no more? is this the only habitation to which such a creature, with all his hopes, is to be limited, to glimmer and cease in an instant? susceptible of, and made for truth, for the devotion, for the glory of God, to sink in dull oblivion when he has just learned to practise them, and have scarce time to know the full use of his being, before he is called on to resign it? How much more consistent is it, indeed, with that wisdom which shines through all the works of the Almighty, with that mercy which is throughout his word, that this world should be only a nursery to the next, that we should receive the first principles, the first seeds of our existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted to a more friendly clime, where the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, and spread and flourish in the kingdom of the Father.

There is something so grateful, so congenial, so consolatory in the reflection, that we gladly cherish it, and even where the light of the Gospel hath never shone, or where only some faint glimpses may have visited, it seems impressed. The human mind, even when least enlightened, shrinks from the thought of annihilation, and looks forward with hope and expectation towards a future state. This thought, this "longing after immortality" is universal, and seems almost natural. Upon this are founded the most exalted hopes of man in his highest state of improvement, nor has God withheld this soothing prospect in his most weak and uninformed condition. Even where man is scarcely wise enough to read in His works the hand of a Creator, he feels within himself something which makes him hope that he shall not cease to be—the savage figures to himself a region which he shall inhabit after death, the very heathen reasoned against the extinction of his being; he reasoned "that affections might continue while the object of them was removed; that the love of the husband, the affection of the parent, the attachment of the child, the sympathies, the charities of life might not end with it—that the time might come when he should meet those whom he here had known, and join with all that were great and good.—He taught that there was darkness, and gloom, and endless punishment

for the wicked ; and joys, and sunshine, and fields of purer ether for the blest. .

Infinitely as all these reasonings fall short of the certain and sublimer views which, as Christians, we enjoy, the general existence of them is plain—in some shape or other it is always found—in every age, in every nation, there is some notion of it ; the more improved the mind, the more strong and just is the opinion—faint in some,—in others vague—but no where unknown ; and as we believe that God would hardly give us talents which were never to be used, so neither would he give us desires and capacities which were never to be satisfied ; the natural desire of the soul for immortality is rather a mark that that is the state for which it was designed, in which the hopes which it now has shall be gratified, and the enjoyments which it looks for shall be experienced.

That freedom of action which distinguishes man from the rest of the creation marks him as an object of a future state. From his very birth he finds a law written on his heart, and if he feels inclinations in opposition to it, he no sooner yields to them than his heart reproaches him. Not led by instinct to follow the one path which is set before him, he is left to act as he wills ; he is able to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong, and finds that he is responsible and accountable if he does it. Reason will tell him

what appears to it best for him ; conscience, if enlightened, what he ought to do ; he has then a plain rule for the direction of his conduct ; he has an inward monitor to say what course of action he should pursue, and he never offends it without its rebuking him, without its telling him that the Being who planted it therein, who hath given him that rule to walk by, and to whom it cannot be indifferent whether he offends or not, will not fail to enquire how it has been observed, and to punish those that have neglected it. Already he does so by the self-accusing, the self-convicted mind—why does the wicked “fear where no fear is?” why should he be restless, and troubled, and foreboding? why should he not die without apprehension and dismay? why—but because he feels that guilt has not been hid from every eye—that *He* has seen it from whom alone it was of importance that it should be concealed—that the stroke of death will not terminate his existence, but send him trembling into the presence of his Judge. •

The very goodness of God would lead us to the same conclusion, for he who “weigheth actions” would no more fail in some state or other to reward the good, than he would to recompense to the guilty the evil of his hands. Yet nothing can be plainer than that the present life can in no way be reckoned a state of retribution ; in the world vice often triumphs while

virtue suffers—there is “one event” apparently “to both,” or the disadvantage seems on the wrong side. Men with little principle prosper, their designs succeed, their wishes are gratified, while the best and worthiest are destined continually to struggle with hardships and calamity, meeting with nothing but disappointment in their undertakings, sorrows where they have not deserved them, and disquietude in the tenderest objects of their hope and love. This is a difficulty which if we look no further than this life, we could not solve—we should be led to think that God cared not for man, nor regarded the happiness of his creatures—we should be led not to question perhaps the goodness of God in the government of the world, (because even then there might be a hidden wisdom which we could not understand) but we should want that conviction of the mercy of it in all its ways, which shews that it is yet the work of our Father which is in Heaven, which teaches us to adore as well as to obey, and makes still the love rather than the fear of him, the foundation of our conduct.

Extend your views beyond the limits of this life, take in the consideration of another, and a scene of wisdom and regularity arises—for *here* we see nothing more than the beginning of the divine government—that the evils permitted to fall upon the good, are designed to try their faith and strengthen their habits,

while the advantages enjoyed by wicked men, are merely temporary, and will not at all exempt them from meeting at last with the punishment which is their due—a state of trial it is, and frequently the strength and the faith of good men is “tried to the uttermost,”—but the trial will not be in vain—without danger there can be no proof of courage, nor any virtue without temptation—we are tried only to give proof of this—distresses are but so many means of it, and afflictions which fall to the lot of the righteous, only the mode of forming the human being, and of qualifying it (through grace) for a higher state of perfection, in which we shall no more “see in part” or “darkly,” but every event will be found consistent, and afflictions which are but for a moment, work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Connect now these natural reasons and hopes for a future state, with that light and immortality which hath been brought to light by the gospel, and with all the great doctrines thereof, viz. atonement and reconciliation, sanctification and renewal of heart; that dispensation of “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, for the final happiness, for the redemption and salvation of the human race—shewing that this was the state for which they were ordained, that the object of His coming was not only to make it known, but to make men meet to be partakers of it;

hear that Saviour speaking of it as his to give, and to whom ; “ I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand ; ” and how the mercy of it is enhanced, how sure is the conviction, how glorious is the hope of it, and what a mercy, what an assurance, what a hope, is eternal life to such creatures as we are—to fallen, sinful, and mortal man. Viewed in this light, “ how wonderful, how complicate is man ”—made “ a living soul ; ” made thereby capable of participating in that eternal existence, which he ascribes to God Himself. His present state is but the infancy of it, the scene of his discipline and probation where the powers of his mind are gradually unfolding, where they are tried and strengthened by grace, to be led on to higher prospects, and prepared thereby for a larger and more important scene of action, when the habits which he has cultivated shall be confirmed, the seeds which he has sown come to maturity, the grace which he has not received in vain bring forth an hundred-fold.

The works of nature may fade, the host of Heaven may be dissolved, the visible world may pass away, but Man will survive them all ; his soul shall live, its faculties enlightened and improved, its powers of doing and receiving good enlarged, shining for ever with new increase of glory, and drawing for ever nearer to that Being

whom then it shall behold. “Your heart shall live for ever.” It is a little word and soon passeth the lips, but the largest capacity cannot comprehend it. A grain of sand is a part of the earth; a drop of water is a part of the ocean; but the greatest number of years may bear no sensible proportion to eternity. If that however will be the measure of the length of our future life, of a future life depending on the way in which our present one is passed—“what manner of men ought ye to be?” Think of everlasting existence and what are all the temptations and the troubles of a mortal life? If the soul is immortal “what shall a man give in exchange for it?” If it is hereafter to live for ever, of what momentous importance is the care of it now? •

SERMON XII.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 20.

“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

THE grandest subject of a Christian's contemplation is that of the resurrection of the dead, certified and secured to us by “Christ risen ;” and the chapter, whence the text is taken, contains St. Paul's argument and illustration of it. It is justly styled “the finest composition on the most sublime subject that ever occupied the mind of man :” for it directs his “thoughts towards that untried state of being of which, at present, he can form but faint conceptions, and points out his condition when this world (and even that portion of it with which he is best acquainted, viz. his own body,) shall be no more.

Important as this must ever be to every rational creature, there are times when nothing short of this can give the slightest interest to the human mind, when all the affairs of men seem insignificant, when the employments which fill up our days cease to engage, and futurity alone absorbs our thoughts. It is further marked as being the portion of Scripture appointed to be used when the last tribute is paid to mortality; of which each, if he has never been the hearer, must one day be the subject, and have it read over him; when, amidst careless spectators, or weeping friends, his body is committed to the dust.

It is the subject peculiarly suggested at this season, when we are celebrating our Saviour's resurrection; and the simple exposition of it, chiefly in the Apostle's words, may be the best means of enforcing its instructions. He is contending, at first, that unless there is such a proof of this great truth as the gospel proposes in our Saviour's rising, there is no positive assurance of it: that if He had not given this great pledge of it, all their preaching was vain; that they who had "fallen asleep in" (the hopes of) "Christ," were yet in their sins, subject to the punishment of them: and he turns, with a degree of confidence, to the reverse, but "*now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in*

Adam all die, even, so in Christ shall all be made alive." In the fact itself, therefore, is laid the foundation of all, for "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him:" there is the same relation as between the head and the members, the first-fruits, (which offered up to God, were to sanctify the rest,) and the harvest: and even the necessity of redemption is pointed out in it; for since it was no other but man that brought death upon mankind, and in consequence of his transgression all are subject to it, so by the suffering of one, were they to be restored, and to "lay hold on eternal life," not as a natural inheritance, but as the free gift of the Almighty, through Jesus Christ.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," is the sentence still in force, and which we see often mournfully executed; but though we are awhile subject to that, we look, in virtue of a better hope, for a better and a different dispensation, when "they that are Christ's" shall be restored and renovated, and even participate in that eternal existence which they ascribe to God himself—these, however, are promises offered only to real Christians, "they that are Christ's;" and the accomplishment shall be "at His coming;" for though they that "die in the Lord" may immediately be blessed, "with Him in Paradise," and still enjoying (perhaps in

nearer intercourse and communion with the Deity) his presence and favor, they may even yet wait for "the fulness of joy" till the final consummation of all things. For, not till "then cometh the end," (that period appointed in the councils of the Almighty) when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Christ must reign, the prophet had said, till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." He who died upon the cross to be our propitiation, He who still liveth to make intercession for us, and is our Advocate with the Father, shall by degrees prepare His elect people for the kingdom of God, and extend His dominion over the whole world; when He "shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power," when He, who in the beginning was with God, and took upon him the nature of man, shall have fulfilled the purposes of man's redemption and enthroned his servants in an inheritance of eternal glory, even He, as Mediator, shall no longer be distinguished, but the eternal Godhead thenceforth be "all in all."

But instead of attempting to explain what is in itself so awfully obscure, we may rather return with the Apostle to the thread of his reasoning, and ask, else (*i. e.* if these things are not so) what shall they do who are baptized in this hope? why were they, or we, baptized for the dead,

why were the early Christians willing to "stand in jeopardy every hour," or for "the rejoicing which they had in Christ Jesus, to be ready to die daily?" If, saith he, to speak after the manner of men, I have been forward in exposing myself to all dangers, in obedience to the commands of Heaven, and contended with adversaries at Ephesus, as men do with beasts, "what advantageth it me if the dead rise not?" Where is the benefit of endeavouring to do what is lawful and right, or what is there to deter from the gratification of every unlawful desire? if there be not another life, what is there to restrain men from taking every advantage of this? if they are to die "like brute beasts, that have no understanding?" like them, too, may they live; the very caution for thoughtfulness is the incentive to indulgence; and the maxim of the sensualist is a reasonable and a just one, "let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." "Be not deceived!" we die, indeed, to this world, but not to the next: "awake to righteousness and sin not." Look beyond the narrow bounds of a transitory life, and in the future doom of the wicked, or the happiness of the just, learn the great lesson of heavenly wisdom: "evil communications may corrupt good manners;" the solicitations of others, or the corruption of your own nature may tempt you to what is wrong, and you may not practically "have the know-

lege of God ; " but " with Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning," and His words are written in plain characters, " verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth ; " and when this earth, with the fashion thereof, has passed away, there shall succeed the state in which the difference will be made between them that offend, and them that offend not, and their eternal condition will be as different as were the courses which here they followed.

But the greatness of this change may be a difficulty to some, who, assuming a different tone may be ready to question, and " some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come ? " And, if our ignorance is really urged as an objection to the ways of God, we may reply to the reasoner with the warmth of the Apostle, " thou fool," and refer him to everything he sees around, for a refutation of his presumption. Could not the same wisdom which at first formed man from the " dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," by an equally incomprehensible power collect the scattered particles of that dust, if by those means alone its consciousness could be restored ? Cannot He that gave, recall the spirit, realize what the Prophet saw in vision, and, " make these dry bones live ? " If every evening we converse with the image of death, every

morning we find an argument of the resurrection : day and night, summer and winter, the spring and the fall, vegetation and corruption, in every thing there is an emblem ; and if the herb of the field fades, but “ knoweth again its time to put forth ” its blossom,—if the very principle of existence seems lost and still, but at its season quickens and revives—if the corn which is buried suffers alteration, dissolution, and death, but rises again in the vigor of the stem, in the verdure of a leaf, in the fulness of the ear—proceeds from little to great, from nakedness to ornament; from death to life—be a Sadducee no more¹—shame not thine understanding by thinking that the grain can be restored to life, and man cannot, and “ if God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe thee ? ” In the likeness however of that change behold your own : “ that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be,” and, “ it is not quickened except it die ”—the germ does not unfold itself, till what had encompassed it rots and decays—the corruption of the original seed is necessary for the development of the future plant—and so may God give “ a body as it hath pleased Him,” (glorified indeed, and far beyond our present faculties even to conceive) to those whom he shall raise again, and that principle, that spark of divinity, the human

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

soul, be quickened and burst forth into real life, when the form under which it was here concealed has mouldered into dust.

From every analogy there is the same result. The various forms of animal life are preserved in their respective orders, but while the species remains the individual perishes. "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds;" formed each for its peculiar place and purpose, and adapted with corresponding powers and faculties; and there may not, perhaps, be a greater difference between the rational and irrational parts of the creation, between the human and the animal, than between man's present and future capacities as to knowledge and enjoyment.

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial," differing from each other in their nature and among themselves in degree; for "one star differeth from (or exceedeth) another star in glory,"—even on earth one Christian hath joy in his maker above another, according as his grace, or faith, is more, and every degree of righteousness may receive its corresponding degree of bliss—for, says the Apostle, "so also is the resurrection of the (pious) dead." Like the seed in the ground the human body is sown, "it is sown" (or committed to it,) "in corruption," lifeless and mouldering, "the earthly tabernacle

is dissolved," it hath neither "ears to hear," nor "eyes to see;" and what glowed with animation is cold and senseless as the clay that covers it—"it is raised," the Apostle says, "in incorruption." "It is sown in dishonour;" the pale victim of disease, the subject of the first sentence against sin: its pride debased, its strength weakened, its beauty worn away—"it is raised in glory." "It is sown a natural body," fitted for the purposes of animal life, but weak and imperfect, liable to a thousand accidents, and having, in itself, the principle of its own decay—"it is raised a spiritual body," with a purity and an excellence to us unknown, but fitted for the duties and enjoyments of a different being. To the different states, however, are assigned their qualities and powers—here for probation, and hereafter for reward. "The first man," (the head of the created race,) "Adam, was made a living soul," capable of happiness, but falling from it, and his descendants inheriting his nature, became frail and corruptible; "the second man" (the head of the redeemed race,) "is the Lord from Heaven," descending from it for us men, and for our salvation, and returning thither to bring us to Himself. "As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy;" they partake of his sinful nature, and are subject to his infirmities; and "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," renewed in their minds, changed in their thoughts and desires,

deriving from above their motives and their hopes; and "as we have borne and bear the image of the earthy," as we are now sinful, afflicted, and mortal men, so, we trust, "we shall bear the image of the heavenly," and by some "mighty (but inconceivable) working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to himself," the frame and constitution of the bodies with which we shall be raised, shall be different from those we carry with us to the grave, and we shall be made "like unto his glorious body."

If then the sublime hope and calling of a Christian teaches him to look to such an exalted state, and leading him beyond the limits of this little life, connects his being with a future and eternal one—if to that being (which would lose half its perfections, could sense and feeble reason comprehend it) his present nature cannot reach, and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," what is that mystery which the spirit of truth declares, but the most important one which ever sounded upon mortal ear, the most awakening and awful that imagination can body forth, "we shall not all sleep," but when nature hears the voice of God, and her Redeemer shall summon to judgment all the generations of men that have been deposited in the tomb, and every individual of that concluding generation, which the Lord from Heaven when he cometh shall find alive upon the earth, "we shall all be

changed—in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, shall put on immortality.”

“ Knowledge, indeed, too wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it ”—we can but pray to be joyful partakers of it. Such however shall come to pass, and with it (when the soul is purified from all pollution, and cleansed from the seeds of weakness and decay, when the glorified frame shall be united to its immortal spirit, and “ the redeemed of the Lord ” shall appear with joy) then shall come to pass the saying that is written by the prophet, in the assured and long-expected view of it, “ death is swallowed up in victory.” Well might the Apostle in humbled yet exulting confidence take up his song of triumph, “ O ! death where is thy sting, O ! grave where is thy victory ? ”—for these are views, which would teach him to look not only without terror, but with joy and exultation, to that time which should terminate his sorrow, and bring him to his home. In the moments of melancholy thought, or (what else were) gloomy meditations on the fate of man, when the hand of the Lord seems upon us, and those fond ties, which promised lengthened happiness, are torn asunder; these are the truths which speak from the silence of the grave, the hopes that arise

from amidst the very calamities, which seemed to bury and to overwhelm them—for who that suffers some of the heaviest calamities that life can know, who that is torn from the arms of fidelity, or has followed the sad remains of mortality to the grave, (when the heart is subdued by sorrow, and reflection awakened by the end of all the living,) has not felt grief and consolation alternately possess him, been soothed and raised by these assurances?—or who, in apprehension of departing happiness, nay life, feels not his hopes preponderate, even when “death o’er nature would prevail?”—to him that believeth them as they ought, the bed of death will not be a scene of terror, nor the last hour one of despair—there is even a majesty in the departure of a Christian, for he has a foretaste of the spirit of that world to which he is approaching, and he meets his latter end, with a face that looks to where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

These are the prospects which open to the righteous even when all around is closing fast, and that which seems to put a period to existence is but the dawn of a superior and eternal one. “The sting of death, indeed, is sin,” it is that which first made and still constitutes its bitterness; and that which gives it strength is (our violation of) the law of God; even that, however, we may overcome in Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, who hath

freed us from the bondage of it, and made what was the curse denounced on man the greatest blessing to him—"thanks be to Him, who giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."

To Him, as to the never-failing source of all we are or hope to be in life, in death, or in eternity, we may direct our prayer, and live in serious expectation of when these things shall be. On the word of God they shall be, and the great practical exhortation the Apostle sums up and applies to all: "wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

SERMON XIII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN XVII. 24.

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.”

THIS was part of our Saviour's last prayer for his disciples, and not for them only, but for “as many as should believe in him,” through their word.

In the prospect of that glory to which his human nature was about to be exalted, he “maketh intercession” for them, as he “still liveth” to do. “I pray not, saith he, that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” He describes their character, “they are not of the world even as I am not of the world;” he asks for grace to direct

them, "sanctify them through thy truth"—and (as the consummation of all,) he prayeth for them in the words of the text, "Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given me" may at length, be with me in that heavenly kingdom to which I am now ascending, that they may there behold with everlasting adoration the riches of my kingdom and my power. The whole chapter is a striking one, as it opens those views which are peculiar to us as Christians; that state to which it is always grateful for mortal creatures to look to which they are taught to aspire, and which "the redeemed of God" shall enjoy together.

Of the happiness which they shall there experience we may be unable to conceive aright, for we are told that it surpasses all which we can, "it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory which God hath prepared for those that love Him;" but of one degree of it we may form some fainter notion, and it is one to which we here are led, viz. that which may arise from the knowledge of each other in a future state, "*I will that they whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which Thou hast given me*"—it was therefore to revive and heighten that pleasure, which his intercourse with them here had formed. It was to be increased by the comparison of the state in which they had before seen, with that

in which they then were to behold, him. It, by inference, denotes a continuation, or in some way, a connexion with our present knowledge, and we may be allowed to consider the hope which nature and reason give of this; the confirmation it receives from revelation; and the influence which it is calculated to have upon our conduct.

Now if Revelation does not forbid to strengthen by that hope the longing and the labouring for Heaven, Nature in some of its severest trials knows, perhaps, no comfort equal to the belief: and if it should seem probable that their peculiar joys will result from the progress and perfection of the character which ought to distinguish Christians in this present life, it does seem equally probable that they who were the objects of it, who either blessed, or were blessed by it, should also be the witnesses of its glory. It should seem even necessary for preserving our consciousness; if "we must give an account of the deeds done in the body," it implies a recollection of them. Futurity appears to be the continuation of our being dependent upon what we now make it—a change, not a termination of it; a different link in that chain which is let down from the throne of the Almighty, through the successive parts of which good men rise still nearer to Him: and our condition in each may bear much more analogy and resemblance to our present one than we are apt to imagine. Judging

from that reference and resemblance we are led the more strongly to it, because our most important duties, and our sources of real happiness here, have a direct relation to the world to come : the affections which we are commanded to cultivate, so directly partake of its nature that we cannot think that their excellencies will end with death. What are the terrors which the Gospel denounces, but that the wicked (those who do evil,) cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven ? What are those virtues which the Gospel so earnestly enforces, but preparation for a state in which they shall be more fully exercised, and where we shall be associated with those alone that do exercise them ? What is it that forms the chief solace of this world, but that very disposition which the blessed above enjoy ? And what heightens the delight of these graces, like the thought of their still going on in those mansions which are suited to their extension and improvement, and the hope of their being made perfect and eternal there ? These are hopes we are glad to form, and we seem to have reason for them even from a natural expectation, for they are associated with all that we look for in religion, and all that we now feel ; the very notion which we picture to ourselves of Heaven is that of its being the abode of the pure, the good, the virtuous, and, therefore, the blessed ; the highest hope that we can raise is that of our being fitted, and of our hereafter being admitted to it.

Renew the memory of the most affectionate friends with whom you were blest in any period of your life, recall whatever serves to endear it, whatever in their virtues soothed you, or in their life was acceptable unto God ; and in proportion as there is reasonable ground for believing that they are therefore, through the merits of their Redeemer, in joy and felicity, will be the first degree of your comfort—but next to that will be the hope that when our probation is at an end “we with them may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom,” “*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me.*” The desire is so natural and strong, so intimately connected with the best feelings of our nature, and tending so manifestly to purify it and exalt it, that it seems implanted by the hand of God, and might therefore be encouraged.

But, secondly, it is increased by what Revelation says. The idea which that suggests of the future world is of its being a society, the abode of many ; “I beheld, and lo ! a great multitude.” It speaks of the city of the living God,” of “the general assembly,” and “the church of the first-born ;” the pious after death are represented as “fellow-citizens with the Saints,” and “of the household of God.” It speaks of new glories, but even these dependent on the days of mortal

trial, for the rich man did recognize Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and was reminded of them by Him—"Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." It suggests, also, that it is a state which good men will enjoy together in sacred communion and fellowship—in which "Christ shall be glorified in his saints," and "God shall be all in all," in which "just men made perfect," will find their kindred spirits and dwell with them in everlasting purity and love; in which, though their degrees of glory may be different, what they possess will last for ever, or be going on to new and increasing perfection.

If mortal concerns may claim a share in the attention of those spirits who are placed so far above them, it may be but to cause them joy in Heaven for having been "faithful unto death;" they who here trod the same paths may look back with calm delight on the difficulties of their way; the remembrance of these may but afford them occasion of triumph for having endured aright, and enabled them to overcome; and they who here took "sweet counsel together and walked in the house of God as friends," may only with similar sentiments, but infinitely raised and ennobled, find therein new sources of delight. To this consolatory expectation, there

are many other passages of scripture which apply, besides the general tenor and import of it. "I shall see him, but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh." "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," said David when he lost his child. "If we believe, saith the Apostle, that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." In his last discourses with his disciples, as well as in his prayer for them, our Saviour comforted them in the view of their approaching separation from him, by holding out the assurance that it was not to be perpetual, and by giving them the direct prospect of being again restored to Him, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also;" and though he first shall "change our vile body that it may be like unto his glorious body," though by some mighty and inconceivable working of omnipotence, "this corruptible must first put on incorruption;" in a different, but far more happy world, we shall not be, "as strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" in a new and more glorious state we may re-appear, and again, "hereafter, we may know even as also we are known."

To the influence of this we may, lastly, look; and it is a belief which is always a support to virtue, as well as to calamity. It is a support to

virtue, for however grateful the expectation of it may be, it is one confined to the righteous. Whatever is written in Scripture concerning the glorified resurrection of the dead relates solely to the resurrection of the just. It is for those who are accepted in Christ that He prays, "*I will that they may be with me where I am :*" and what can tend more either to the cleansing of our thoughts, or the cherishing of those affections which alone can qualify us for it?

We form a wrong notion of Heaven if we consider it as a place which God's goodness may put us in possession of, though we have not previously acquired a disposition to enjoy it. It is the abode of the pure and good, and nothing that is impure can ever enter it: the threatenings, therefore, of God warn us against such a course of action, such a temper of mind as would exclude us from it, and the promises of God incite us to the practice of such virtues as are essential, in order to render us "meet to be partakers of it." In the recollection of those who, we trust, are so, and in the hope of our being so, there is an awakening motive to the exercise of every Christian duty. We love to recollect a place by the circumstances of those friends we have in it. We are led to think the more of it, and we learn to love and to desire it the more. We might do so in the most important case of all; we might think on those who here "walked with God,"

and are now safe in the hands of God ; and if we profess a hope of being, hereafter, so likewise, if we would realize the bright prospect of meeting with those in Heaven who formed our chief happiness while on earth; if we should prefer, to all the pleasures in the world, the satisfaction of finding, hereafter, in happiness and peace, those whose presence while among us now makes, or made up, the comfort and enjoyment of our lives—in order to this, we must walk in their path, we must follow the same way, we must be guided by the same spirit. They are glorified, because they were just ; and we must be just before we can be glorified—it is our sins only that can divide us—they sin not, and, therefore, are blessed ; and they would bid us “ go and sin no more,” that we may be blessed with them.

It lightens, moreover, the pressure of calamity ; I speak not now of the different view it gives to all the dispensations and duties of life, as means of disciplining, or as opportunities of preparation for it ; of the persuasion, that they who labour that “ the same mind be in them which was also in Christ Jesus,” are (under His grace,) not merely forming habits for present happiness, but such as shall continue and increase hereafter, heightened in degree, but not altered in their nature—of the inducement it supplies, even for kindness towards all, as those whom we hope to have joined with us in the joys of immortality, as well as for the cultivation of those purer

affections, which death itself cannot dissolve; to the relief and comfort it is calculated to bring we might now refer; and I affirm that there are times when, next to 'resignation to the will of God, nothing so effectually tends to calm the mind; even, perhaps, by the thought of this being the mercy which that very Will may be intended to promote. In a state of affliction the mind requires something to rely on, that promises the peculiar comfort for the loss of which it grieves, and of which it can form some adequate conceptions—in dissolution it looks for restoration; in the breaking of worldly ties, to the connection with heavenly ones; in separation, for re-union; and it is the mercy, the unspeakable mercy of the Gospel, to supply, by these means, the assurance of them, "*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am!*" "Is there then a difference between regarding this life and the dispositions we are to cherish in it, as temporal advantages, or as being the foundation of what, hereafter, we shall be? Is there a difference between considering our present existence as a final, or only a previous destination, and the sufferings of mortality as lasting ones, or only as temporary interruptions to happiness which may but enhance its permanent enjoyment? Is there, indeed, a difference to the heart of man between the thought of losing them whom he loves for ever,

and the prospect of being united to them again in another and better state of mutual existence?"[†] These are hopes which, even had we little ground to rest them on, tranquillize and soothe us in the moments of grief; but they come with consoling and reviving power under the sanction of that Gospel which teaches us "that they which are Christ's at his coming," shall be raised and quickened; exempted from the troubles and the sorrows of a mortal state, and clad in that glory which belongs to the possessors of an higher existence.

These hopes, indeed, tend to cheer, to refine, to elevate our desires, and open the most transporting prospects that man can know. For though we are not entitled to the hopes unless we first are subject to the conditions of the Gospel, yet, as Christians, we are taught to know that in futurity lies our chief concern, and that in preparing for futurity we should seek our chiefest comforts; that when, "if, in this life only, we had hope," we should be most miserable, we are, through Christ, restored to the blessed hope of everlasting life; and judging from what we now feel, what earthly consideration can be so powerful to make us walk worthy of it, as the belief that by so doing, an entrance may be administered to us therein.

[†] Paley.

SERMON XIV.

ASCENSION DAY.

LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

“He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lift up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, that while He blessed them He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.”

It was the object of a late season to follow our blessed Saviour through the last stages of his mortal life—to consider Him as bearing our offences, and becoming the atonement for them—as “dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.” It is the subject of the present one to view Him in his divine capacity; to behold Him rising to that Heaven which for these purposes he had in mercy, left—to look to Him as interceding there on our behalf, as dispensing

thence the sanctifying influences of his spirit, and to adore in awful humility his incomprehensible majesty. To the first of these we are on this day directed—when, having consummated what was necessary to be done by Him on earth—having given his Apostles directions and authority to found his Church, and promised them his continual aid in the prosecution of their design—“he ascended into Heaven.” The circumstances of it are given in the usual simplicity, no convulsions happen in nature, no disturbance of its usual course, to awaken attention of the world to the spectacle which was to follow. “He led them forth as far as to Bethany,” (the place which he had so frequently visited, and made the scene of his miracles and devotions) and, ending as he had begun, he “lifted up his hands and blessed them,” giving them, as it were, his final benediction. “And it came to pass that (in the very act of it,) *“while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.”*”

If at his transfiguration, “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light”—with the same glory might He again be clad when about to take possession of His throne, they beheld Him rising in splendid majesty till “the clouds received Him out of their sight,” and He entered, amidst the acclamations of angels, into His courts above. Filled with devout

admiration His disciples remained fixed in wonder, perhaps, in prayer and praise; "and while they continued looking stedfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said "ye men of Galilee why stand ye thus gazing up into Heaven," as if this were a thing incredible? Is it not what your Lord himself hath often told you—what the Scriptures have? "Ought not Christ to suffer," and thus to be exalted—and must not the "Heavens receive Him till the restitution of all things?" This is but one display of that glory to which a future and yet more majestic one hereafter shall succeed, and of which not ye only but all the inhabitants of the universe shall be the witnesses—"this same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven," shall visibly descend from it—He shall come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

Had we witnessed this event, and beheld "the only-begotten of the Father," clothed with uncreated light, and rising in the glories of his divinity; with equal adoration we too might have "hailed it," and like them, "continued stedfast in his faith." But the facts of the Gospel are not less true, or less real because they are distant—the eye of faith may still look up,

and like St. Stephen, when "he beheld the Heavens open,"—see the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God ;" though he was exalted "far above out of the sight of the Apostles, thither their thoughts still followed him, and we might also "in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell." The ascension of our Saviour was the end of His mortal humiliation, and we may consider it, *first*, as the completion of what had been foretold ; *secondly*, of what seemed necessary in furtherance of the scheme of human redemption ; and *thirdly*, of what may be the great hope and likeness of ourselves.

And with respect to the *first*, the very words of Christ Himself, after His resurrection, the words of the angels after His ascension, declare it—"ought not Christ, said he, to suffer,"—and "must not, said they, the Heavens receive Him till the restitution of all things.?" His taking, indeed, our flesh upon Him at all was but the humiliation of His divine nature, which was still *there* even while His human nature dwelt on earth : "no man, said He, hath ascended into Heaven but He which hath come down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven"—and His condescension, His mercy therein, as well as the importance of the purpose for which He came, is thereby proved and magnified ; He "took upon himself the form of a servant," to

live awhile on earth, and shew how even while we live upon it we should have our conversation in Heaven—to shew us the way to it—to atone for offences which else would for ever bar our entrance to it; but, when He had effected that, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers, He was to return to that which He had left—“that He ascended, saith the Apostle, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth,”—“that when, saith the same, He had spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over sin and death, all power might be His in Heaven and earth,”—that He might have “a name above every name.” If the declarations of our Lord’s exaltation were express, so also were the types of it—as the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man was to be lifted up, that whosoever looketh on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Enoch was translated into Heaven; Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire; the high-priest was to enter into the holy of holies, but it became Him, who was the great High-Priest, to enter into the holy place not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; and thither, accordingly, Christ ascended, in our nature and on our behalf,

On these scenes, indeed, in those courts, and in that presence where even angels scarce dare tread, it becomes us to think with all humility; but we are assured, *next*, that in the great coun-

cils of eternal wisdom this was a necessary part; the great purposes for which our Lord was "made man," He is declared in Scripture as furthering in Heaven; they are represented as not to be completed throughout till He had ascended, but to be the fruit and the consequence thereof; the Holy Ghost was not to be given till Christ was glorified; the Comforter was not to come till Christ had "departed and sent Him unto them;" in the economy of human redemption something, therefore, was wanting till He had ascended, something to be effected after He had—the same agency, the same power was to be exerted, the same great work to be going on; and He was accordingly not only received up into glory but He was seen in it—to see the Godhead in the person of our Lord is proposed to the Christian's hope, as the highest privilege of the Saints that shall overcome—where enthroned in majesty on high He still exerciseth His invisible government (as He promised,) over His Church, by Himself and His spirit—is ever present with them, imparts Himself unto them, abideth with them, hears their prayers, mingles them with His mysterious sacrifice, watches over them during their pilgrimage, guards them to the end, and receives them into glory; for this it might be that "God having raised Him up, set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might,

and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but that which is to come—for this, that all things are put under His feet, and that He is raised to the head of all things in the Church—for this, that the voice of the angelic multitude is continually heard, chaunting the hymn of His triumph, “worthy is the Lamb that was slain;” and saying, “blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

It is, *lastly*, the hope and likeness of what we may be; and here, as in all the dealings and dispensations of the Almighty, if there is great awfulness and warning to the thoughtless and impenitent, there is great comfort to every contrite heart—for it brings the Almighty down to our conceptions, and makes him, as it were, the object of our sight as well as of our love; we may not be able to form a notion of the Eternal as a spirit, we may of Him, in whom “dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” when they “beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,”—we may of Him, whom, after having lived and conversed on earth, by a local and literal ascent, his disciples saw, taken up into glory: and if there be any thought powerful enough to make us ascend in heart and mind, if there be any which can draw men after their Saviour, who has been “lifted up from

earth," it is that of Him who, though still invested with our human nature, is "adored by angels and archangels, and all the company of Heaven,"—it is that of there being one who is at this moment at the right hand of the eternal Father, a representative of the human race—that He who, when on earth had not where to lay his head, is the same gracious and awful being who now stands before the mercy-seat, the "first-born among many brethren," whose temptations He hath encountered and overcome, is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities; our safety, our salvation, our souls are still in his care,— "we have an advocate with the Father," ready to plead his own all-sufficient merits in lieu of our imperfect and all-sinful services; the same love which here prompted Him to die for us still liveth to intercede for us; the same Saviour who was here "the propitiation for our sins," and expiated them upon the cross, still presents his healing sacrifice; the same being who here said, "come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy-laden," bids us draw nigh and lift up our hearts to Him in Heaven; bids us, from his eternal state, look to that place whither He is gone before; and where, if we here "be dead" with Him, we shall also live with Him—where, if we here suffer, we may, hereafter, reign with Him."

Of His kingdom, indeed, we may not as yet

have faculties to conceive aright, but in His ascension it seems revealed to our senses, as well as to our understandings, we see the fact of His entering therein, we feel the hope of ours. With that same body with which, for our sakes, He condescended to be clothed, glorified indeed, and fitted for Heaven, subject no more to age, or death, He rose from the earth—the likeness of our mortal putting on immortality—the likeness of that mighty working which shall change our vile body. His agency ceased not with his presence on earth—neither may ours; He, indeed, walked in the way which leads to Heaven, that we might follow it; and it is pointed out by his precepts, it is marked by his example, it is consecrated by his blood. As a man, he “walked with God,” and found, in intercourse with Him, comfort and strength. He met with sufferings, and entered not without them into glory—but by sufferings He was made perfect. He finished the work which was given Him to do, and at the end of it He rejoiced; all that was painful, all that was humbling, all that was afflictive, had passed—He “ceased from his works,” He “rested from his labours,” He “commended his spirit unto God;” and God did not “leave his soul in hell, neither did He suffer his holy one to see corruption;” He was received up into glory—He, who on earth, united our nature with his own, now possesseth it in its highest lustre and perfection,

proposeth his exaltation as the inducement and encouragement to us to follow Him in the way by which he attained it, and promiseth that through Him, we, too, may overcome, and be more than conquerors; we see Him rising from the darkness of time and the dust of mortality; we see Him entering into a state of unmingled happiness and triumphant glory; we see Him clothed with infinite authority, angel and archangel bending their adoring head before Him; we see Him, still more, entering into dominion only to continue the same mercy which He had begun, inclining his eyes for ever upon that world which He came to save—breathing through every age the inspiration of that Holy Spirit “which proceedeth from the Father and the Son,” and gathering in progressive mercy all that will come into the fold of his eternal safety.

Is there in such prospects nothing to invite the heart to meditate with hope and thankfulness on what He has done, on what He ever liveth to do for us, and influence the will to concur in that merciful design? Is there not triumph in the thought that as the great Redeemer when he ascended up on high, though he ceased to be visibly on earth, ever liveth, so every true believer when he leaveth this world, may through His merits, be exalted with him, and the accepted spirits of the just, participate their happiness in a state of visible society with each other, and

in the presence of their glorified Redeemer. If these are thoughts which no other doctrine can supply, they are such as might, by their very brightness, cheer and raise us above the petty evils, and entanglements, and excitements of this lower world, and sanctify us by the very hope which they inspire—for they tell us of “bodies terrestrial, and bodies celestial,” of beings existing in higher spheres; they shew that this is but a part of one great and stupendous whole, a beginning of one vast design, going and still carrying on, wherein they who here receive and live according to the words of the Lord Jesus, shall feel his transforming power, and hereafter be changed into the same image from glory to glory.

To prepare and sanctify us thereunto he hath promised us, (as on the day of Pentecost he poured on his disciples,) the gift of the Holy Ghost—it is ours to pray for and to co-operate therewith, that living here unto Christ, we may live with Him hereafter, rise to where our Saviour Christ is gone before, in heart and mind thither ascend and with him continually dwell, that when the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him, he may bid the gates of life unfold—“bid Heaven lift its everlasting portals high—and all the pure in heart behold their God.”

SERMÓN XV.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

JOHN XVI. 7.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”

OUR Saviour, after his resurrection, thought fit to stay awhile upon the earth; He not only “shewed Himself after his passion by many infallible proofs,” but “was seen of his Apostles forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of Heaven;” he gave them authority to “go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” he provided for the future establishment of his Church—he promised to be “with it always, even unto the end of the world;”

and bid them wait for something which was not to be declared till after he had ascended into Heaven, viz. the coming of the Holy Ghost. *

The time of his 'doing this, answers to our interval between Easter and Whitsuntide, and the Gospels for the present Sundays are accordingly selected from those portions of Scripture in which our Lord directed the attention of his disciples, to something which in the plan of the divine wisdom, was yet to take place—to some means, (which must at the moment have seemed to them unintelligible, but which he assured them should come to pass) whereby though bodily absent he should still be present with them for all the great purposes to which he had appointed them—to that, which on the day of Pentecost was manifested.

The sanctifying influence of the Spirit forms a peculiar part of the Gospel dispensation.—There are many views in which it might be considered, and at present as to its necessity and nature, as implied in our Saviour's words, "it is expedient for you that I go away." Now, as to the necessity of some such aid, of our wanting strength "above our own," in order to our doing what is lawful and right, there is little need of proof, for he that is not convinced of it must be a stranger to himself as well as to the word of God—as careless an observer of what passes within his own breast, as of what is written in

the Holy Scriptures. The weakness and corruption of human nature has been the general acknowledgement, and the sad complaint of the wisest of mankind; and indeed every man may feel it in himself, and observe it in others. Let even the best reflect upon himself, and see how frail and erring he is; with what reluctance he sometimes chooses what his understanding represents to him as good, and complies with what his conscience pronounces to be evil; how his passions and affections rebel against his reason, and how continually he offends against the very law which he approves; let him think; if he finds not two opposite principles within him, "the law in his members warring against the law of his mind," and "bringing him," from his youth upwards, "into captivity to sin," if it be not counteracted by instruction and discipline—how much he stands in need of guidance and of grace to keep him in the right, the "narrow way which leadeth unto life," and he will own the necessity of "the wisdom which is from above" to enlighten his mind that he may discern the law of God, as well as to incline his heart that he may keep it.

With this natural feeling, the words of Scripture, too fully agree, representing our nature in this very state, as "alienated from God," as "evil continually;" as unable of itself to perform what it ought, and disinclined to it; pointing out both

the disease and the remedy, the original cause of of its fall “whereby it is very far gone from righteousness,” and the means of that righteousness being restored; the image in which man was created, lost—and the renewing of it, after the image of Him that “created us anew in Christ Jesus.” It saith that “the carnal mind is enmity with God, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” that “we are not sufficient ourselves as of ourselves,” but that “our sufficiency is of God,”—that it is only through his strengthening us, that we are able to do those things which be needful in order to the obtaining of that happiness and salvation which Christ hath purchased for us—that the feebleness of our nature requires the succouring aid of his spirit, for all the great purposes of fitting us for it, viz. to “regenerate and renew a right spirit within us,” to infuse new principles and views—to “raise us from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness,” to keep us, in a word, safe amidst the pollutions of this world, and inspire us with those endeavours and desires which may prepare us for another. Now this so-much-wanted aid is offered, and its nature is defined “an influence and operation of the spirit of God upon the minds of men, communicated to them in a manner suitable to the constitution of their nature, as rational and accountable creatures.” It may be given at times and in manners best known to

eternal wisdom, "given to every man to profit withal," and to those who will profit by it "in more abundance." It does not destroy our natural powers, for then all exhortations to comply with it would be vain, and though we are repeatedly assured by the word of God, that "of ourselves we can do no good thing," yet are we never represented as mere machines subjected to an overwhelming and irresistible influence. It is generally a co-operating, not an overpowering cause—generally, I say, because though there may be instances where the grace of God (like his hand sometimes in the works of providence) may be too plain to be denied, we are not usually to expect such declarations, and might be cautious how we say that we have experienced them; it is made the motive for our exertion—"work out, saith the Apostle, your own salvation with fear and trembling"—why? because, as it follows, "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do"—his working in us, is made the motive for our working also—he gives the principle, he sows the seed, he sends the rain, he must bless the increase, but the care of the seed when sown, the cultivation of the soil to receive, the pulling up the weeds which might check its growth, must be ours—we may receive, or we may reject—we may use, or abuse—we may cherish, or we may refuse it; we may improve it; "to Him that hath shall be given;" and if

we improve it not it may be taken away. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit;" therefore he may be grieved—being grieved, he may be rejected—being rejected, he may be withdrawn.

That upon this doctrine are founded all the prayers of our Church is plain; and in this, as in most other respects, while she retains the vital principle, she avoids the extremes into which others have run—stating "the condition of man to be such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God, without the grace of God preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will,"—and yet praying that "as by his special grace preventing us, He doth put into our minds good desires, so by his merciful guidance we may bring the same to good effect." Confessing ourselves to be "miserable sinners," we ask "that it may please Him to give us true repentance, to endue us with the grace of his Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to his holy word;" we pray to Him "to take not from us his Holy Spirit," which "alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men;" we beseech Him to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of it," and own (in our catechism,) that it is "God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God."

But that it is the doctrine of the Gospel is

as plain. The plan of that is the recovery of the human race—the restoration of them to happiness, by means of a Redeemer, as the propitiation for sin, and of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier of the ungodly. To the effecting of this plan each of them seems necessary, and one is made dependent on, and is the effect of the other.

Our Saviour represents it so in his last conversation that he held with his disciples; he discoursed upon it in the most plain and express terms, declaring that one great expediency of his departure, was the sending of the Holy Ghost to enlighten the minds of his people, and that when He came, he should “abide with them for ever,” should “dwell in them,” and be with them,—and “teach them all things,”—and “guide them into all truth.” “Nevertheless, saith He, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away;” without this, therefore, there remained something in the divine proceedings which could not be fulfilled—“for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you,” this was therefore to be the effect of his going—“but if I go away I will send Him unto you.” He had therefore the power to send; and the reason of his not being sent before, is elsewhere assigned, “the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Christ was not yet glorified,” it is represented as the price of his sufferings, as a favor

owing to his merits; as the seal of our redemption ; he was not to be given till He had ascended unto the Father, and would be given immediately upon it. We might trace herein an uniformity of design, a filling up in its different parts of the divine economy, of what revelation is, viz. a scheme of grace to man for the purpose of his salvation—as we might perhaps that unity of persons in the Godhead, of which elsewhere we have still stronger marks. Our Saviour says, “I will send you another Comforter,” and yet he says, “I will not leave you comfortless.” He speaks of Him as a person, when “He, the spirit of truth is come, He shall abide with you for ever,” and yet it is of Himself he promiseth, “lo ! I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” He saith, “I will pray the Father, and he will send,” and yet he saith “I will send him ; and “if any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will take up our abode with him.”

In divine things, perhaps, it is their sublimity which makes their mystery. God may work by means, transcending human intellect to conceive, and truth depends not upon man’s ability to explain it ; but though we may not conceive the mode by which He imparts Himself unto his creatures, the different expressions of his doing so, of “Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,” of His “being present with us,” of our being

“the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in us,” amount but to the same, and the great doctrine of his doing so rests on the same sure and certain grounds. It is enough for us to know that we are living under an economy which makes our sanctification the care of the Deity himself; that the Eternal Spirit loves to make the heart of man his own abode, and that unless we do despite to that gracious power He will never desert the habitation which He hath chosen.

And what more awakening or animating truth! What can be so adapted to the necessities of man in his greatest and best interests! What greater motive to cherish the corresponding affections, which it is so calculated to call forth! What greater encouragement to well-doing, than the persuasion that if we do what we can, we shall be assisted in doing what we ought—that an Almighty arm will succour us—that it will “prevent us in all our doings, and further us with its continual help,” that it will strengthen the weak, and hold up the fainting and bind up the broken-hearted, and refresh the heavy-laden, and give grace in time of need! What greater dissuasive from vice than that we are not under grace while we continue under sin—that if we despite the spirit of grace, it will be withdrawn—that if men suffer themselves to go wrong, they may be suffered, too, by one that

alone could prevent them—that they may “fall from their steadfastness,” fall from one wickedness to another, and be given over to a reprobate mind.

The grace of God is necessary, and it is offered ; “ God would have all men to be saved,” but it is offered on the condition that we are willing to be led by it, that we listen to its influence, that in a sense of need and necessity, we ask for it—and in this, as in all cases where human salvation is concerned, though the work is ultimately of God, it is conditionally of man, who though he is not able of himself to obtain it, is yet prescribed the allotted part in it which is given him to do, for though (as has been said) God made us without our concurrence, he will not save us without it ; in all the parts of the Christian dispensation it is so—Christ “died for our sins,” but our forsaking of them is the condition of our benefitting by his death ; he “rose again for our justification,” to perfect, not to dispense with holiness of life ; and that we might apply it by faith—he “ascended into heaven” that we might seek for and obtain it.

The aid of the Holy Spirit is freely offered to all, nor does that blessed person cease to strive even with the most profligate till they have obstinately rejected the counsel of God against themselves—but “it will not always strive with man,”—if men sin against the Lord (though, be

sure, at last their sin will find them out) they may for awhile continue blinded and hardened in it—as insensible to all moral feeling as the lifeless and the dead—“dead in trespasses and sins,”—if men will not hear, it may cease to speak—if they resist it, it may leave them—leave them to their own hearts’ lusts, and to follow their own imaginations—leave them (instead of knowing the blessed “fruits of the spirit,” love, joy, innocence, and peace,) to the “works of the flesh ;” and “the works of the flesh are manifest,” which are these, “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, hatred, variance, wrath, envyings, drunkenness, murders !” “Oh ! think of this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away and there be none to deliver ;” think, whosoever thou art, that neglectest to seek the grace of God, to what dangers, to what impieties, to what wickedness you may be led ! When, in the hour of temptation, you would otherwise be left weak and defenceless to the assaults of him who “lieth in wait to deceive,” when your heart is inclined to any evil thing, and the natural corruption of it might lead you to do wrong, when some secret compunction, when somewhat within seems forcibly to check and wishing to keep you from the commission of it, think that it may be the warning voice which would preserve you from present guilt and future remorse, which would “not suffer you to be tempted

above that you are able," but with the temptation would also make a way for you to escape; remember that it is God who would work in you both to will and to do; think that it may be His mercy which would restrain you, and say, "how shall I grieve the Holy Spirit of God, how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Seek, on the other hand, that much-wanted aid, and you will know, by experience, the certainty and the comfort of it by the effect of its operation. Endeavour not only to know, but to do his will, and with the desire will come the power. Labour to do your duty, not relying on your own strength, but in the conviction of your weakness and dependence, and you will find that God will be gracious to you. You may not be able to distinguish between that and the natural operation of your own mind, for, like the wind which seems to blow where it listeth, "thou canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goeth;" but you will have reason to believe that to every sincere, and honest, and virtuous endeavour, (owing, perhaps, at first, to the Spirit of God, begun, continued, and ended but in Him,) there will be added a strengthening, a sanctifying, an effectual power, and that the grace of God will be with you. On this point, therefore, we might, at present, rest; and while on the necessity, the indispensable necessity of it, (and upon the gracious promise of that necessity being

supplied,) we might insist; while it is proposed as the subject of our prayers, “ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;” the asking, the desiring, the following of its influence, is one chief duty of a Christian; for we may then trust that it will be given in such measure as shall be most fit; and that being duly used and improved it will be increased daily more and more for the ultimate accomplishment of its great end and object, viz. the deliverance of our souls from the captivity and the consequences of sin. “And, as he that knows the importance of any great work which is given him to do, and is conscious of his inability to perform it alone, feels his dependence and obligation to one that would enable him to do it, turns to him for help in his difficulties, is humbled under the want and need he has of assistance, is careful to improve, and solicitous lest he should neglect and thereby lose it—so, in the greatest of all works, nothing leads so powerfully to that train of thought, and sentiment, and opinion, which best befits our mortal state—nothing so effectually produces those two characteristic and christian virtues, viz. humility with respect to ourselves, and dependence upon God,”¹

The very notion of God's imparting Himself to His creatures, of His being “with us” and

¹ Paley.

“in us” is awful but consolatory—the belief that if we are not wanting to ourselves, His grace will be sufficient for us! And we are taught to seek, and to depend upon that grace, as giving us power to act aright, as inspiring, enlightening, and sanctifying; as giving the best support under the trials and afflictions of life to which it has pleased God to subject his creatures in this probationary state, as “filling with all joy and peace in believing,” and even as beaming on their dying hours, with foretaste of approaching bliss! May it on yours! that when the day of grace is passed, and He that hath given to each his portion of it, shall inquire into the use that hath been made—when the unprofitable servant shall be cast out, and he that hath improved his talent shall “enter into the joy of his Lord,” may that which hath been committed unto you be found increased, may that grace which hath been given, not have been given in vain.

SERMON XVI.

W H I T - S U N D A Y .

ACTS II. 33.

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

“THE coming of the Holy Ghost” forms the great subject of the day; and the nature, office, and influence of that divine person (the influence of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts for all the purposes of conversion, of regeneration, and of redemption,) is one of the chief doctrines of our religion. Our Saviour had promised his disciples before his ascension that He would “come again unto them.” He had bid them “tarry at Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high;” and when they were assembled there

for one of their three annual festivals, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and they were all with one accord in one place," they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," and began to "speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Men "of every nation under Heaven" heard twelve simple and untaught Galileans declare unknown and mighty truths, in languages which they had never learned—they did "hear them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God."

"They were all amazed, (as we read in continuance,) saying one to another, what meaneth this? are not all these that speak Galileans?" and the text is taken from that discourse of St. Peter's upon the occasion, who, as the first and immediate proof of the power which he had received, declared the meaning and the mercy of it: "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice and said unto them, ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken unto my words, for these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." He sets forth the great mystery of godliness, (as displayed in man's redemption,) and appeals to their own witness of it in "Jesus of

Nazareth," delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain, whom God raised from death, because "it was not possible that He should be holden of it." He saith it was Christ of whom David spake, saying, that "his soul was not left in hell." He dwells upon the spiritual nature of the kingdom to which he now understood his Lord to be ascended, and insists upon the present miracle as an instance of his power, *"therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear"*—He also told them that this blessing was to be general and lasting, "unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call"—He said to them, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost"—and the words might lead us to consider it as the promise given of the Father—as the effect of Christ's exaltation—and as the pledge by which every Christian is entitled to hope for the same; "ye shall receive the Holy Ghost."

Now we find the Holy Ghost spoken of throughout the Scripture under many different descriptions, as emanating, as proceeding, as one with, and yet as distinct from, the person

of the Father—as a visible agent in the original formation of the world, when “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep,” as conducting the whole dispensation under the Old Testament, when “holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”—and as poured forth upon our Lord at his baptism in the river Jordan, when “the heavens were opened, and John saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting on him.” When the Baptist declared himself the fore-runner of the Messiah, he declared it as one peculiar mark of his character and office, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire,” (or rather with the fire of the Holy Ghost, alluding perhaps both to the active nature of that holy principle which Christian baptism conveys into the heart, and to the form in which the Almighty Spirit made his visible descent upon the Apostles, “like as it were cloven tongues of fire sat upon each.”)

Christ Himself promised his disciples that when He should leave them to return to the Father, He would send them “another Comforter to abide with them for ever,” even the Spirit of truth, which should “lead them into all truth,” give them just views of that scheme of mercy which they were to publish to the world—a right understanding of the ancient prophecies—a discernment

of their completion in the person and nature of Christ—"bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had told them"—and supply them, without study or meditation of their own, with a ready and commanding eloquence when they should be called on to make the profession of the Christian faith before kings and rulers.

And, accordingly, they were enabled to do so. Though before timid, and unbelieving, and looking for a temporal instead of a spiritual deliverer, they seem at once to have comprehended the scope of what before "their hearts were blinded that they could not see"—they could point to all the former predictions of the gifts of the Spirit which then they saw verified—they could remember David describing them prophetically in the Psalms (as subsequent to the Messiah's ascension, and as consequences of it,)—"Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, (*i. e.* received as the great gift,) that the Lord God might dwell among them," (dwell not only as God did in the Jewish sanctuary, not only as our Saviour did among men, "when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," but as the residence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church,) and they could go forth and shew the signs of it in themselves—they could; in many instances, confer it, "then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy

Ghost;" "they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord confirming the word by signs following." They did so—now knowing (next) that this was the effect of His ascension: and indeed till this was shewn, the Apostles themselves seemed ignorant of what was to follow; they were a "little flock," deemed by the world deserted and forlorn, assembled privately, and not yet enlightened from above. They seem not to have known before the full efficacy of what they had witnessed, much less the future consequences. When they saw their Lord expire upon the cross, it was with a degree of doubt and darkness, "they trusted this was He which should have redeemed Israel;" when they saw Him again, till He opened their understanding "they knew not the Scripture that He should rise from the dead;" but when they witnessed the fulfilment of the promise, "I will send (the Holy Ghost) the Comforter," the whole scheme was then unravelled—they knew at once that it was the effect of His mediation, the fruit of His ascension—the proof that his intercession had prevailed—the token of the Father's acceptance of his atonement, and of the power exercised by Christ in his exalted state; "therefore," saith St. Peter, "being to the right hand of God exalted, (and the reason of that exaltation, St. Paul also founds upon his being obedient even unto the death upon the cross, it was thence that God

had “highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name,”) “*therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost ; He hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear ;*” agreeing also with his own declaration, “I will send him unto you, I will come again unto you ;” agreeing with those various parts of Scripture in which He is represented as exercising by his Spirit an invisible agency over his Church—as being present with, and mystically united with, his own—as “teaching the hearts of his faithful people by sending to them the light of his Holy Spirit,” as giving them “a right judgment in all things,” as enabling them “to rejoice in his holy comfort;” and if the expressions of “Christ dwelling in the heart,” or “the spirit of God dwelling in us,” of “his manifesting Himself unto us,” or its being the Holy Spirit which “guides us into all truth,” of “no man coming unto God but by Him,” or no man being “able to say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” appear, in many cases, similar and equivalent ; if the act which is ascribed to each appears sometimes distinct, and sometimes co-operative and alike, it does but agree with that unity of the Godhead, but diversity of persons, which, upon the word of Scripture, we receive, but which, with that humility which the Scriptures inculcate, we presume not to scrutinize ; if

we find the peculiar attributes of Deity assigned to Him, He shall "teach," He shall "testify," He shall "guide you," and He is described as "coming," as "witnessing," as ever present, as "knowing what is in man," nay, what is in God, ("who knoweth what is in God but the Spirit of God,") as appointing, as disposing, as "dividing to every man severally as he wills;" the blaspheming Him as a sin not to be forgiven—the "tempting" Him, being tempting God—the "lying to Him," being lying unto God—we can but receive and believe as is written; the part which he is represented as performing in the great scheme of redemption does but seem to magnify the mercy of it; being his peculiar office to enlighten our understandings that we may know "those things which are to be but spiritually discerned," viz. what the wisdom of the Father hath devised, the love of the Son hath wrought for us, and the power of the Holy Ghost can alone teach us effectually to believe.

The first gifts of the Spirit were those miraculous ones with which the Apostles were endued for the propagation of the Gospel. The abiding ones are those by which the eternal Spirit claims the human heart as his own dwelling, visiting the humble, lowly, and contrite one, infusing the spirit of wisdom and understanding; and "to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord your God shall call, is the promise

given." When he was made a Christian, each was admitted to this covenanted hope—he received the sign of it—he was by baptism regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church—not only externally into the visible Church, but to a covenanted title to the pardon and grace offered in the Gospel "by the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" the promise that a spirit shall, if duly sought for, be conveyed from God into the Christian's mind, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, producing that holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," that change of heart which the Scriptures declare as previously necessary—inclining us to will and to do "according to God's holy will and pleasure;" to "master the importunity of appetite, to curb the impetuosity of passion—to resist the temptations of the world—to baffle the wiles of the devil—to take up our cross and follow our crucified Lord through the straight and thorny paths of virtue to the peaceful seats of endless bliss,"—enabling the believer by the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," to become that creature which, without such aid, he cannot, and which alone shall be the object of God's mercy in a future life.

The great assurance, the earnest of it is this

day given ; the pledge that grace sufficient to salvation is given to all who repent and are baptized ; that spiritual aid is vouchsafed and offered to our acceptance, and that no one fails of receiving it but by his own fault, though " if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His ; " we are taught to ask for, and then promised that we shall receive it, " ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find," and although we are not to expect that upon all occasions we may distinguish the workings of it, to say here it was my own reasoning ended and the Spirit of God began, or to mark the line of partition between human efforts and divine illumination ; how many might find the promise fulfilled in themselves, and bear witness to circumstances where it was not their own skill, their " own arm that helped them ? " How often under the sorrows and afflictions of life must many own that they have been " wonderfully supported ? " On how many occasions may most men look back where they have been delivered, or upheld, in such a manner as to leave no doubt of who it was that worked in them. We might ask of many whether, if " inclined to any evil thing," they have not felt a secret compunction, an inward rebuke (lessening, as they cast it from them, or becoming more powerful as they suffered it to be so,) drawing them, as it were, back, and suggesting that all was not right, that this sin " was

but for a season ;” or whether, in resisting temptation, there was not a secret, a proportionate satisfaction ; whether, on the contrary, when endeavouring to do their duty, they were not strengthened in it ; whether, when in an humbled, devout, and willing-to-be-instructed mind, they opened their hearts to the influences of the Spirit, they were not more and more disposed to “ receive the word with gladness ”—whether there seemed not a power aiding the returning mind, comforting the penitent, confirming the doubtful, binding up the broken-hearted, in all their offices and endeavours going as it were along with them—a power, in the more easy and emphatical words of scripture (declaring the effect, as well as the cause of it,) which shed abroad the love of God on the heart by the Holy Ghost, filling it with all joy and peace in believing.

And is it not even reasonable to expect that such might be the case ? When a good man in deep affliction makes his prayer and supplication to God, and feels in consequence a spring of comfort flowing upon his mind, such as no reasoning of his own, no external circumstances, no human suggestions could produce, is there not reason to believe that it arises from a higher source, and is owing to the secret influence of the Holy Spirit ? When the pious Christian, turning to God, finds a train of thought, an elevation of desires and hopes, a deep conviction of

his own natural state, and of his need of renewal, and a higher view of spiritual and heavenly promises, of all he wants and all which is revealed—when, after services of devotion, he finds himself “comforted in the inner man,” his heart full of holy joy and humble confidence, in the state which thoughts of God and of His mercy in Christ Jesus alone inspire, and filled with those fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, meekness, and all those graces which are enumerated as His peculiar work, is there not more presumption in attributing this to the operations of his own mind than to the Spirit of light actually dispensing to believers that grace and favor which He hath promised in the Gospel? Or when temptations have occurred, and we have almost been on the point of yielding to them—when we were well nigh ready to fall, and were unable to deliver ourselves from the difficulties in which we were placed—if in any sorrow, plague, or trouble, our own strength was insufficient to restore us, our own judgment to direct, or our own skill to find the way to escape; if when the spirit was in heaviness and our soul refused comfort, we on application found it, found our way made plain, our darkness light, the snare broken and ourselves delivered, have we not had reason to believe that it was because we laid hold upon one that was mighty, and that the Spirit had “guided us into all truth.” “I can

call my own experience to witness," says one whose sound judgment was equal to his piety, and who, placed high in an arduous profession, had full means of knowing human nature, and of what it required, to enable it to do aright even in the exercise of its best and highest powers, "I can call my own experience to witness, that even in the external actions, occurrences, and incidents of my whole life, I was never disappointed of the best guidance and direction when in humility, and a sense of deficiency, and a diffidence in my own ability to direct myself or grapple with the difficulties of life. I have implored the secret guidance of the divine wisdom."¹ In the great work of all—in our spiritual life—we are taught to implore the same wisdom, and to believe that it will be given us in such manner and in such degrees as may be most expedient for us. To the giver only it belongeth to prescribe the means of obtaining his bounty, as well as to judge of the fitness of those on whom it should be bestowed—He hath prescribed the appointed means of obtaining it, and it is accordingly connected with all the habits of a Christian's life, with that constant communion, by which we are commanded to ask for it, which opens an intercourse with Heaven, and draws down the spirit of it on our own. It was for these that "the disciples were met together with

¹ Jer. Taylor.

one accord, in one place," when the descent of the Holy Ghost took place, upon the day of Pentecost—it was for these that the infant Church continued "in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." It was on these that so many manifestations of it were vouchsafed in the early stages of it. "While Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." "The same day there were added unto them three thousand souls." Might He, who, as on this day, did so teach the hearts of his faithful people, vouchsafe to descend and dwell on ours; establishing and increasing our faith—quicken our zeal, and enlightening our minds—checking us from all evil, and prompting us effectually to every good work—supporting and comforting us under all trials—and by his mighty influence bringing us to a meetness for exaltation to that kingdom of glory, whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, where he ever liveth to dispense the fruits of it to those who seek for them; and whence he shall hereafter come to take unto himself those that are purified and sanctified thereby.

SERMON XVII.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

HEBREWS III. 12.

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

THERE is scarcely anything which our Saviour more frequently guarded against than the rejecting of his Word through unbelief; He represented it continually as the mark of an “evil mind,” “an evil and corrupt generation seeketh a sign;” He warned against the indulging of it in these striking words—“he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” It is this which the Apostle guards against, “*take heed and beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief,*” —take heed how you refuse or question what are

divine truths—be assured that the belief of the doctrines of the Gospel is necessary, and that the refusal of them may be attended with the most serious evils.

That there is frequently an indisposition to receive such, both the earlier ages of the Gospel and the later periods of the world sufficiently prove; it is, perhaps, in human nature—we are apt to trust ourselves—we love to rest upon our own strength, and to make our reason the measure of God's "doings. Not" that we are to impute an evil heart to those who wish to know and believe aright, and may, after an honest endeavour to do so, come to a different conclusion from ourselves, or in matters of acknowledged difficulty may vary rather in the mode of understanding than in admitting them—(of the power of each man to believe God only is the judge, to his own master he standeth or falleth, and we are not therein to judge one another,) but knowing by the Scriptures that we are likely to "be led away from our stedfastness," that they direct us to pray for the increase of faith, and that they do oft cry aloud against unbelief, those passages and those forms are read at this time, as warnings of the danger of rejecting whatever may be found therein, or proved thereby, and of reminding us of "the proper use of the understanding in matters of faith." And here we might first distinguish between what is contrary to reason,

and what is above it—right reason cannot be contrary to Scripture, because Scripture contains the reason of God, and when human reason sees things as the wisdom of God sees them, then is its proper office—when otherwise, it becomes “philosophy, falsely so called ;” and if it be not corrected by humility, chastised by experience, and enlightened by “the wisdom which is from above,” be very far from that lowliness of mind which is the first characteristic of the Gospel, the mark of those who “cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven, because they “receive it not as little children.”

This is not, however, to decry human reason, or to disdain the use of it in matters of religion—the acquisition of knowledge, and the improvement of the faculties which God has given us, is, in almost every instance, the proper object of laudable ambition—but it is very necessary to recollect that there are inquiries which lie beyond the utmost stretch of our comprehension—that, in subjects of such sort, we cannot be too cautious, or too diffident—that, instead of cutting them short in order to bring them down to our own level, we should rather look up to them with reverential awe, “dilate the mind to the mystery, not contract the mystery to the mind,”¹ expecting that (as is the case in all human matters,) we may, hereafter, attain unto the knowledge of

¹ Bacon.

those things ; some of which, in this first state of our existence, may seem "hard to be understood."

The very method, indeed, in which we acquire human knowledge might lead us to it. In the visible world (and in our younger days more especially,) we hear of many things which we are disposed to treat with levity, if not contempt ; we think them incredible—and what, though others (weaker, as we suppose, than ourselves,) may have believed, is far too much for us ; we soon, however, meet with somewhat that startles us—we enter a little way into a subject, and find that vastly more than we conceived lies behind—find facts, of which before we should have denied the possibility, or the consequence, and of which before we little saw the force, tendency, or connection. A little reflection shews that they are both possible and true—shews the fault to have laid not in the things, but in ourselves—in our misapprehension—in our want of judging right ; "hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us ; but the things which are in heaven who hath searched out, and Thy counsel who hath known, except Thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above?" We, then, "spiritually discern" what otherwise we could not know—with the increasing conviction of our need of revelation, our apprehensions of its truth increase, and it is

truly said by one of the wisest of men, that "while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no further, but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity ; and that as a little knowledge may make a man an atheist, a great deal will make him a Christian."

To all the doctrines of revealed religion this would apply, and more especially to the foundation of them all, viz. the nature of the Divine Being, whose very existence is so inexplicable that we can form no adequate notion of it, (however indisputably we must believe it,) and as inadequate an one of the proceeding, the union, or distinction of persons, which are mentioned as existing in the Godhead. And how can it be otherwise? Is it to be expected that our limited understandings should be competent to the full comprehension of the nature and the properties of the Eternal? When we attempt to investigate Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, "the same," (and Jesus Christ is by the Apostle styled so) "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—existing, and self-existing, before time or worlds began, without beginning and without end, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, privy to the inmost thoughts of every man, past, present, and to come, and knowing and upholding all things by the mere word of

his power, the mind is lost in the vastness of such ideas, and if it endeavours to explain them by words, may be bewildered and entangled in endless mazes. We know not the essence of our own mind, nor the precise distinction of its several faculties, and why should we hope to comprehend (and shall we venture to deny because we cannot) what, in the deficiency of language, are called the persons who, we are told, exist in the substance of the Divine. We know not how "the soul and flesh are one man," what wonder if we know not how "God and man are one Christ"—yet we read that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," that He was in the form of God before He was made in the likeness of man—that he had glory with the Father, before the world began, and after his ascension, was again to be glorified with it.

When, however, such stupendous truths are revealed, the mind seeks often (but in vain,) to understand more of them than it is able, and on what no distinct ideas can be formed, different ways of understanding the same truths may arise: and it was to guard against the unbelief of them that forms have, at different times, been drawn up, and such expositions given as might best preserve what appeared to be a fundamental article of belief. That God is one is the voice of nature, the assurance of the Old Testament, the constant assertion of the New; it is the

Christian doctrine—but that in the Almighty there may not be distinct essences, differences, or distinctions, and still but one, is more than we may have powers to comprehend, but much more than any human being can deny.

We might find however among nations unacquainted with Christianity, traces of a similar belief, as among those who have the corrupted traditions of early revelation, there are still many vestiges of the same—viz. of a trinity of persons, of the second becoming incarnate and dwelling upon earth, of the spirit giving, as at the creation, life and energy. The word which in the Jewish language denoted God, is said to contain indications of the same truth, viz. that in Jehovah, is comprehended what is called the Word ; it is marked in the singular expressions of the Bible, when, at the creation, the spirit of God moved or brooded upon the face of the waters, and the Almighty is introduced as saying “let us make man after our own image.” Compare the very first verse of Genesis, with that of the Gospel. “In the beginning,” saith Moses, “God created the heavens and the earth.” “In the beginning,” saith St. John, “was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” If He “was before all things,” what is this but eternal ? if He “knew what was in man,” is not this the attribute of God ? if he saith, “I will send the spirit,” from whom but himself can it

proceed ? “ if,” he added, “ if any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will take up our abode with him ;” are not here again his other expressions verified, “ I and the Father are one ?” It is not, however, from one or two expressions, but from the whole and general tenor of Scripture that the doctrines of it are to be collected—and this doctrine appears throughout ; one great design of the Jewish religion was to maintain and teach, amidst the surrounding idolatry, the unity of God ; the Christian religion could not be contrary to this, yet the very form of initiation into it, the last command of its author was, “ go ye, therefore, into all nations, baptizing them in the name (not the names,) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;” the blessing of God is given in the words, “ the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” reminding us of the great scheme and method of the Almighty, in creating, redeeming, and sanctifying. We read that “ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” and that “ by Christ we have access, through one Spirit, unto the Father :” if worship is to be given to God alone, to “ call upon the name of the Lord ” was the common and peculiar description of the first Christians, “ they sang (saith the historian) an hymn to Christ as God ;” St. Paul “ prayed unto

the Lord ;” St. Stephen breathed his last, “ calling upon God, and saying, ‘ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ;’ ” and when we are told that “ the only-begotten of the Father ” was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, (so express that when Philip said to our Lord, “ shew us the Father and it sufficeth us,” He gave no answer but this, “ have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ;”) when we see such assertions proved by all the prophecies of the expected “ Emmanuel, or God with us,” and by all the miraculous powers of a present deity ; when we find such attributes as are incompatible but with Deity applied to Him, and, throughout, worship to Him never denied by Himself while on earth, the divinity of Christ seems as evident as words in their plain sense can make it—if we are to “ honour the Son even as we honour the Father,” we are justified in ascribing the same—if, on his incarnation, it was said “ let all the angels of God worship Him,” what should we do—and if they gave glory when He came into the world, when we say, “ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,” we seem assigning only what “ was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.”

On such subjects, indeed, we can proceed and

think but with deep reverence, for they are "high;" they are "far above out of reach," "such knowledge may be too wonderful and excellent for us, and we cannot attain unto it;" and the cause is evident, viz. because God is infinite, and our knowledge is finite. Scornful rejections, however, of doctrines which have the marks of his authority, merely because we cannot enter into the inward reasons and complete scheme of them, would be dreadful irreverence in the highest of his creatures, much less doth it become our lower rank of being, and the lamentable weakness of our corrupted and degenerated faculties. They are enough to check the presumption of those who would be "wise above what is written," and hastily decide where there is not light to direct: they teach us to repress that vanity of reasoning by which much perplexity and infidelity have been occasioned; they inculcate that charity which allows for a different judgment in others which it would think dangerous in itself, and does not disbelieve anything which is written in Scripture, because, believing that to be the Word of God, it dares not.

To those who are conscious of their real state, all the chief doctrines of the Scripture agree and harmonize, while the difficulties of them lessen—the incarnation, the atonement, the divinity, seem but parts of the same great plan—they are, like their great author, "full of grace and truth,"

and they speak the words of truth, and hope, and consolation to every penitent and believing soul, and the tendency of the heart of unbelief is manifest; for if we once begin to admit no mystery, (when even the world is full of them,) and receive no doctrine but what we can comprehend, we are launched, at once, upon a sea of doubt, without anchor, chart, or compass—without guide, and without hope, liable to be “tossed about and driven by every wind of doctrine,” everything by turns and nothing long.

But if there is anything which to a humbled and reflecting mind, to a weak, sinful, and mortal being might bring refuge and rest; if, amidst the doubts and cavils of an “evil generation,” there be anything which yet might remain hallowed and untouched, it is the being able to lay our hand upon the Bible, and receiving it in its plain and sublime, though oft mysterious sense, to say, “so it is written and so I believe;” happy and wise enough if I can but make it the rule of my faith, and the guide of my life, and may but attain to those promises, which are through the power of the Father, the love of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Ghost held out therein.

That there are points in it above our comprehension must necessarily be the case, for the object of them is that Being whom “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered

into the heart of man to conceive," and where the powers of language, speech, or thought would fail, we can but bow in silent awe and adoration, for even the seraphim, before his throne, "cover their faces with their wings;" and by us, if not invisible, God can be but dimly seen! Thankful, however, and satisfied with the light which is given, be it ours to believe and to adore—looking to that world, where they that are ever before Him, cast their crowns to the ground, and "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!" And waiting for that time, when from our feeble and mortal sight, the veil shall be removed, and we may see God as he is, in brightness inaccessible, in glory inconceivable, in majesty eternal.

FINIS.

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